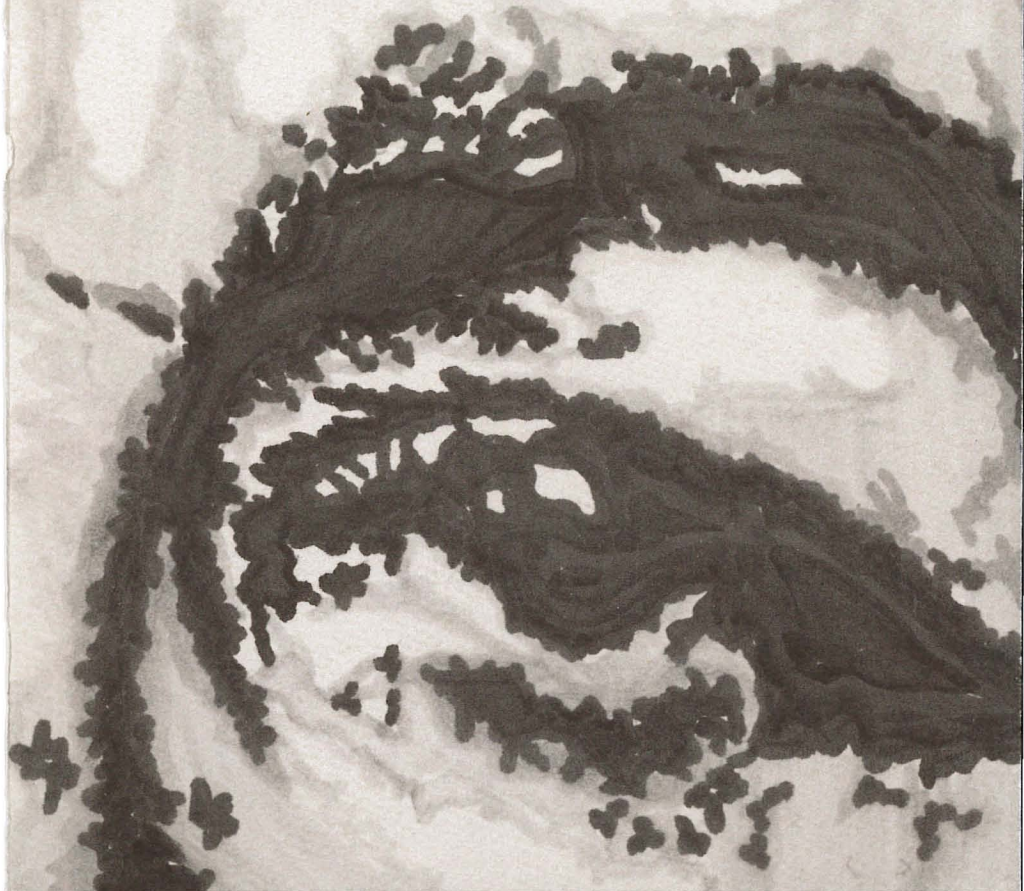


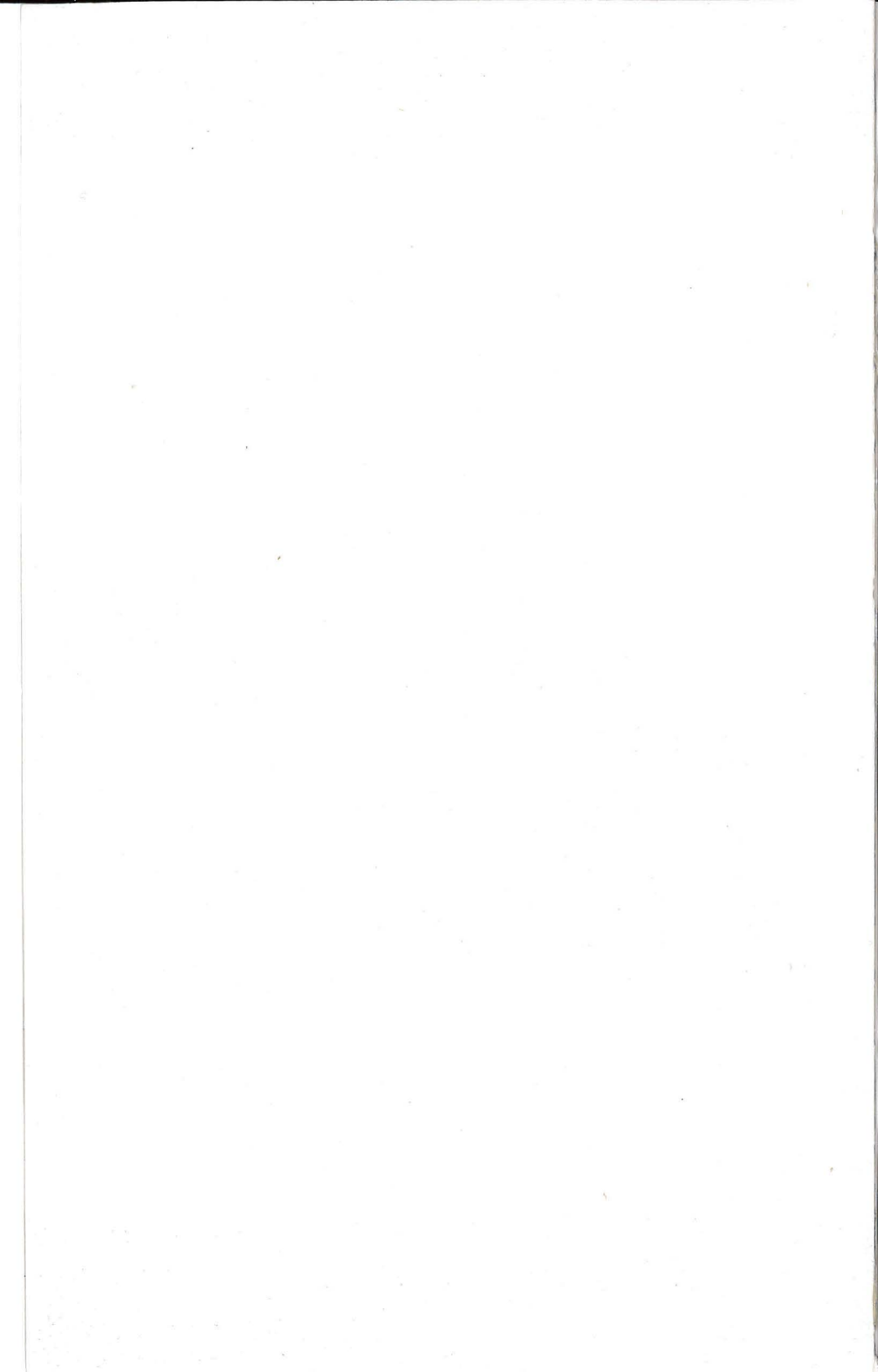
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# PATTERNS

36th Edition







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The 36th Edition  
of  
**PATTERNS**



A Publication of  
St. Clair County Community College  
Port Huron, Michigan

## PREFACE

The protoplasm of good writing begins with the creative mind: agile, receptive and deft, which, with every experience, accumulates a rich storehouse of material. The act of creation is a profound one. It comes up mysteriously and with crescendoing energy from the very depths of someone who is involved in the continuing education of living fully. Goethe said: "Talent is formed in solitude, character in the stream of life." But writing can be a lonely, discouraging business and everyone engaged in it occasionally needs a few receptive friends to help build up the fires of enthusiasm when the embers begin to glow and burn. Goethe knew that if a writer is to keep honest while gaining in facility and technique with language, character must exist and yet at the same time must always be in formation in order to render talent fruitful. Writing gives the writer a true knowledge of oneself and others, and the clarity to see oneself without illusions can be a humbling experience. But it is this same humbling experience that leads to self-knowledge, wisdom, and compassion, and, incidentally, to better writing.

In honor of the creative mind, the exploring imagination, and the discovery of self, this 36th edition of *Patterns* presents the selected works of students at SCCCC. At a time when increasing technological distractions hum and buzz our attention away from those solitary acts of creative energy, the introspective and self-searching moments of the writer at work, we have the privilege of bringing to you stories, poems and essays which say again and again, "Art and its patrons will survive."

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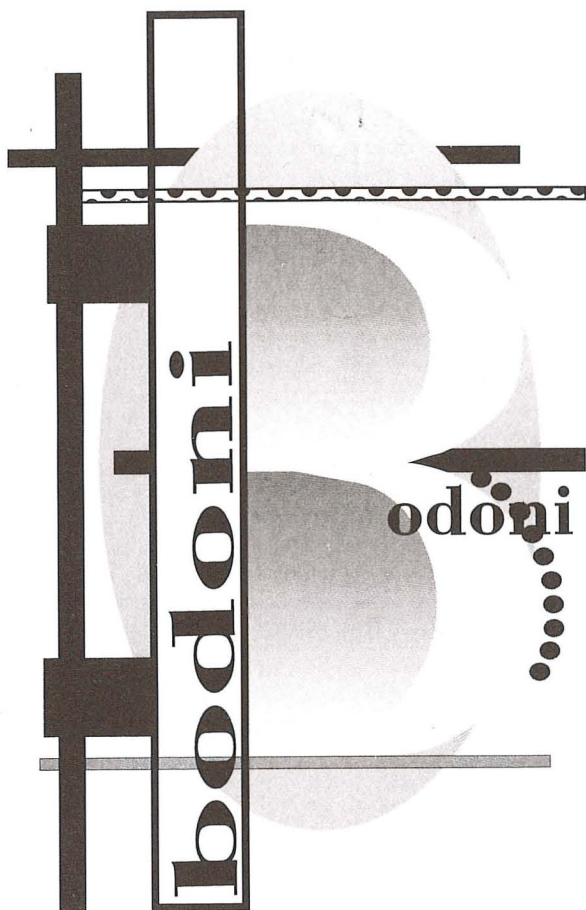
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POSTMODERN 'B'  
Michele T. Chartier

## A SPECIAL TRIBUTE

*"To See the World in a grain of sand,  
and Heaven in a wild flower,  
Hold infinity in the palm of your hand  
and eternity in an hour."*

William Blake was both a poet and a painter, an artist who saw so much revealed in a troubled world and yet found in his art ways to redeem and recreate the human condition, inspiring others to celebrate the joys of the human spirit.

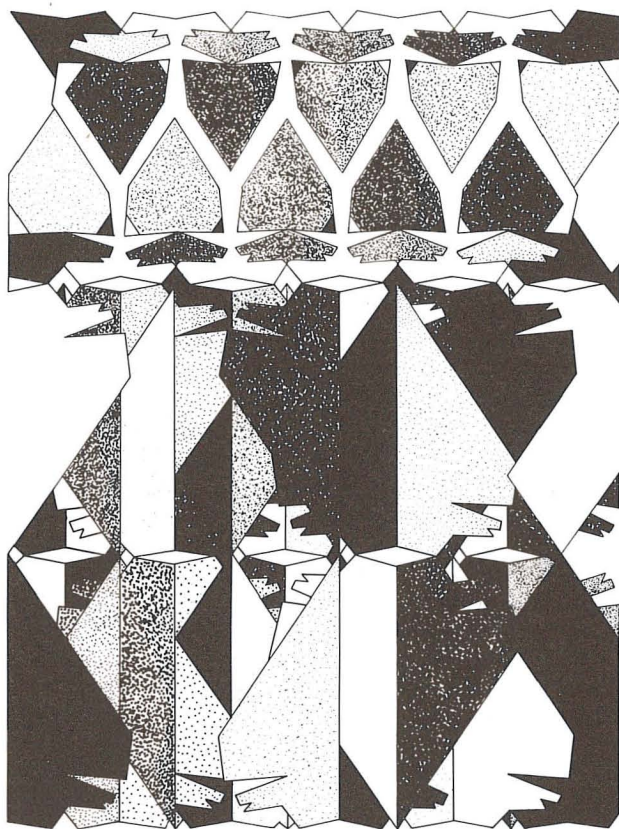


Even though Patrick Bourke, Dean of Arts, Letters, and Science, officially retires this year from his full-time position at the college, his influence will continue to inspire us. That we are able to honor him with this special tribute is largely due to his belief that the creative expression of students deserves to be seen and heard. When funding ceased to be available for this publication, he spearheaded the effort to raise the necessary monies, and he helped to cut costs by doing layouts himself. The Friends of *Patterns* soon expanded to become the Friends of the Arts. Thank you, Patrick, for giving us this financial foundation to support our student programs in writing, music, theatre, and the visual arts.

His belief in the value of the liberal arts as the foundation of all general education provides the community and the college with a vision of responsibility to share with the young, a vision that would encourage dreamers and does not only to gain skills to make a living but learn ways to enjoy living. In May 1993, Patrick led a delegation from the college representing business and art to Kazakhstan, formerly a part of the Soviet Union. There he, David Korff, and Paul Schmitt experienced the liberating joy of the arts in a culture that dreams of providing a new future for its young in a vastly different world. They learned how far our technology has progressed but experienced how richly Kazakhstan humanity has been preserved in its arts and culture. As vice-president, now president, of LAND (Liberal Arts Network for Development), a consortium of Michigan's community colleges, Patrick developed a program exploring the connections we need in education to meet the challenges of the 21st century

creatively and effectively. Thank you, Patrick, for sharing with us your visionary leadership, helping us to see that the arts not only enrich life, they preserve and renew it.

"A thing of beauty is a joy forever," wrote the poet John Keats. Patrick's whole life is based upon the simple equation of beauty and truth that Keats extolled in his lyrical verse. Color, harmony, light, sound, and image surround him at work, and home. He delights in the arts of nature as well as those created by human beings. Every day Patrick takes time to look at something beautiful and to listen to fine music, to read good books and to write in his journal. He finds time to smell the roses, and he shares his joy for living with friends and colleagues. Thank you, Patrick, for reminding us to take the time to look at the world around us in order to enrich the world within us.



REPETITION OF FORM  
John Sexton



## Dedication

### Sylvia Bargiel



The influence of Sylvia Bargiel has been woven like a subtle pattern of poetry and music into the lives of all who know her -- whether as close friends and colleagues or as students seeking help with clarity in writing or understanding in reading. Her words of advice untangle knotted thoughts and simplify sentences with strokes of sensibility. Among friends, her love of word play can twist syllables punningly into provocative prevarications, stunning with rapier wit those whose verbal ability has succumbed to senility.

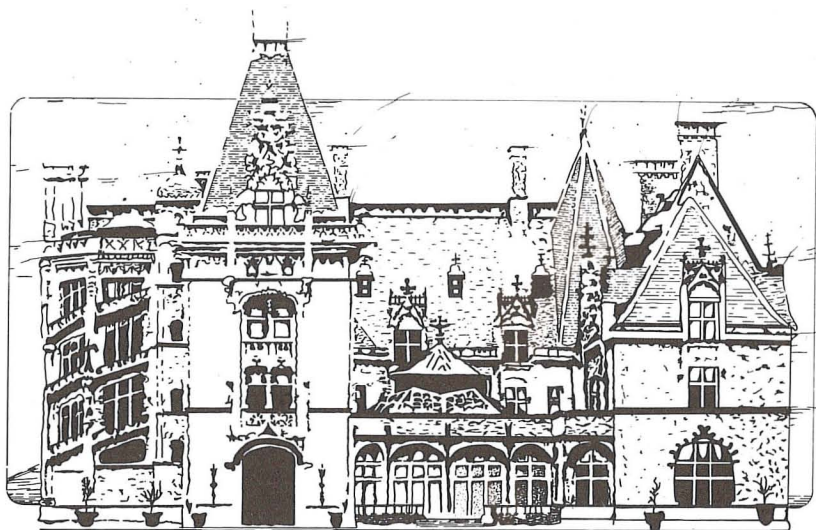
Her love of Shakespeare is evident not only in the classroom and in her pun fun, but for those fortunate to be nearby when she recites passages from her favorite plays, lines memorized years ago at The University of Michigan where she majored in English and Middle Eastern Studies, receiving two masters' degrees. Each semester she encourages students to explore the liberal arts beyond a limited practicality that seeks only credit hours and to find an enrichment for lifelong enjoyment. To aid this personal search, she arranges theatre trips to Meadow Brook or Stratford.

Not only is Sylvia interested in the cadence of language and literature, she is a patron and participant in music, traveling to New York to see and hear the Metropolitan Opera and to Ann Arbor for special events like the May Festival. For years she loved singing with the International Symphony Singers and continues to sing in her church choir. Her daughter Mary received her degree in music from the University of Michigan and is now a graduate student in music in Ohio. With Shakespeare, Sylvia exclaims, "If music be the food of love, play on."

Sylvia Bargiel has truly been a Friend of the Arts at the college. She and her mother, Mary W. King, always have given financial support to the Friends of Arts, but more importantly, they have supported the arts by their attendance at concerts, plays, art exhibits, and *Patterns* receptions. During her years at SCCCC, Sylvia has faithfully served as a judge for *Patterns*, each year reading hundreds of entries thoughtfully and encouraging good writers in her classes to polish their works and submit them for consideration. She is also a founding committee member of the Marge Boal Drama Festival, dedicated to the memory of a colleague and close friend.

It is this love, commitment, and dedication to the best of humanity preserved in its various forms of artistic and creative expression that Sylvia generates among others. Through her example, she teaches that the arts provide the delight and wisdom to live our lives fully. The arts amuse and amaze us, craft and create us into more compassionate and tolerant people.

"Who is Sylvia? What is she?" the poet questioned years and years ago. At St. Clair County Community College, we have found the answer in a modest, unassuming, witty, warm, and generous person. Our Sylvia retires this year to enjoy her books and music, her crossword puzzles and bridge games, her travels and friends. This edition of *Patterns* is dedicated to Sylvia Bargiel for all the intricate patterns she has woven into our many memories.



BILTMORE  
Nancy Ketcham

## The Richard J. Colwell Award

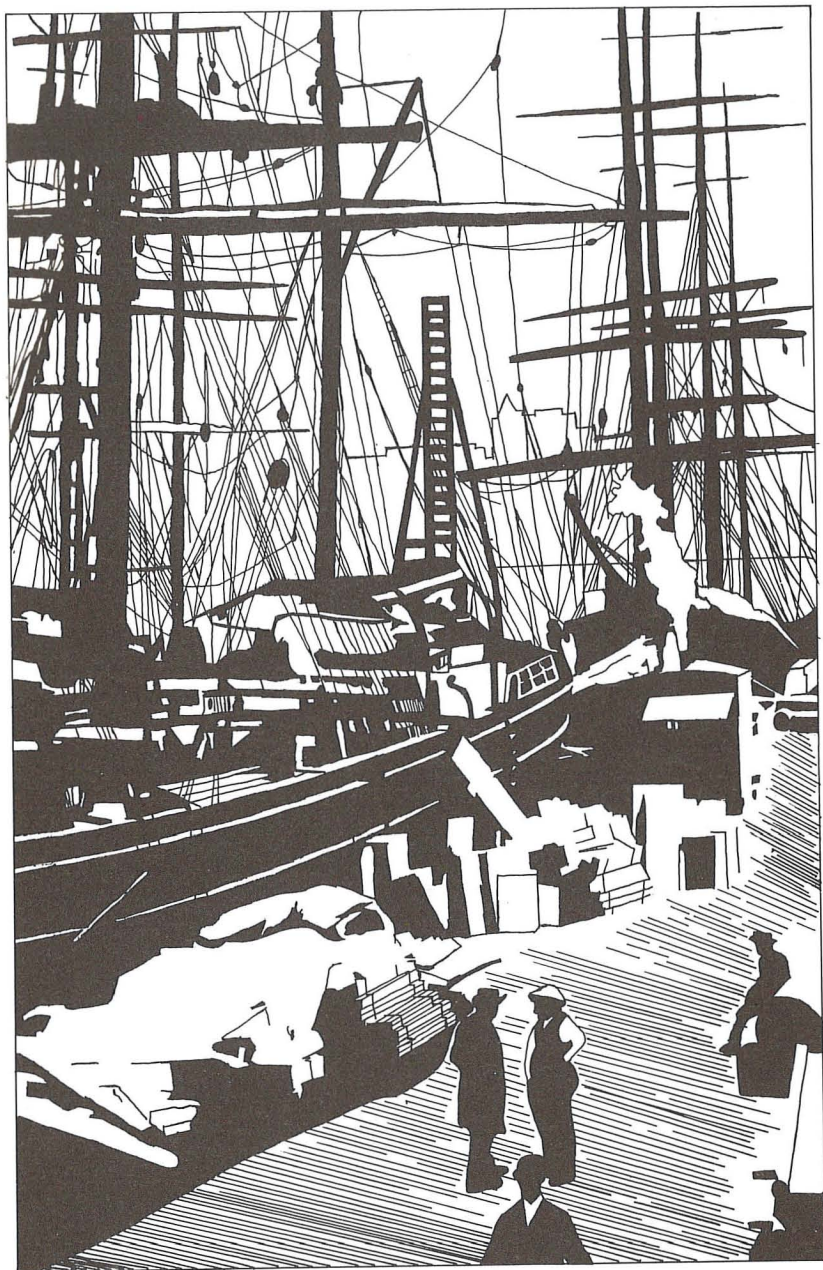
*And that's my night sky, before me,  
and I'm the child standing under it,  
my back getting cold, an ache in my eyes,  
and the wall-battering heaven battering me.  
At every blow of the battering ram  
stars without eyes rain down,  
new wounds in the last supper,  
the unfinished mist on the wall.*

--"The Last Supper," Mandelstam

This year's recipient of the Richard Colwell Award for the most innovative short story is Michael LeFevere, a student who demonstrates the rare gift of the artist who is willing to challenge conventional themes of culture. Many of his works reflect speakers or characters in a state of disturbance, their visions of disquieting images, and their spiritual loneliness. Michael's work reminds us how easily we can become strangers to ourselves in a modern society, thus our own prisoners of conscience. His short story, "The Ballerina," published as a selection of merit, offers the reader an intense narrative account of a soldier caught between the politics of war and the soul.

Michael LeFevere's artistic talent extends beyond writing. He is a painter, and intends to continue his work in the medium after transferring to either Eastern Michigan University or the Center for Creative Studies. Meanwhile, he has supported himself with a variety of jobs, while writing or painting during off hours. Although his recent appearance with the fall Creative Writing Workshop at the Coffeegrounds shop was one of his first public readings, one senses that more is to come, much more.





THE PRICE  
Rich Bonham



## The Eleanor B. Mathews Writing Award

This year, the *Patterns* committee honors C. Brett Johnson as the Eleanor B. Mathews Writing Award recipient. The award was established ten years ago to recognize excellence in creative writing. Past winners of the Mathews Award have exemplified those qualities of the creative imagination that inspired the teaching of Eleanor Mathews. Certainly Brett does this as well; it is clear that he understands and loves the beauty and power of language in the same way Eleanor did.

Brett's writing is sharp and immediate and his control of details produces vivid images. This word artistry may come, in part, from his interest in art. In fact, he has said he once was more interested in illustrating what he wrote than in the writing. He said that he changed his focus when he realized he was better at writing than drawing.

Brett grew up in the Port Huron area; he lives with his parents, younger sister, and older brother in Ruby, Michigan. Brett is a business major who plans to attend General Motors Institute. A responsive and interested student, Brett has earned honors here at SC4 and is a member of honor society Phi Theta Kappa.

"A Conflict of Interest" aptly names one of the important themes of Brett's work. Often that conflict arises between what society expects and what the soul wants or feels. It is a problem that we all face, more and more each day, it seems, and so Brett's works are relevant to us and our times.

# The Star Within

## *Second Place*

by Virginia Lynn Artrip

In the warm September sunshine  
Leaves crunching down below  
Hung many golden apples,  
Waiting in a row.

I wondered for a moment  
As the scents wafted around;  
Why can't life be that simple?  
Nearly expecting an answered sound.

But no audible answer came  
And I was left to wonder why  
My life had dead-ended again.  
Seems all I did was cry.

Longing, I reached for the sweet fruit  
And held it in my hand;  
Glad the tree had grown on solid ground  
Instead of dying in the sand.

Then suddenly it came to me  
In a quiet peaceful knowing.  
The lesson really was right there;  
It was all about seeds, and growing.

Just like the fruit, I have peeled away  
All facades I've worn so long.  
And the sweetness beneath the peel  
Touches my mouth now like a song.

It's simple again as nature reaveals  
When I really want to know.  
There's the potential of the trees in me  
If I give the seeds time to grow.

There's a star inside the apple  
When you slice it side to side.  
The seeds line up to let us see  
The possibilities, with pride.

As the stem connects the apple  
So God connects to me  
And in the quietness of a moment,  
I am all I need to be.

## And Puppy Dogs' Tails

by Sherry Jones

Picture, if you will, a brunette pixie of a child who spent her first few years happily riding piggy-back, viewing God's Creation over Mama's shoulder. Painfully shy and the youngest of four children, I had somehow been granted access to the greatest of secrets: there was an indisputable, undeniable truth in the magic of Merlyn and Oz. No wound was too great to heal ... if things were not as we wished, it was because something far better was yet to come ... there would always be happy endings ... and love conquered all.

Dad left in the summer of 1960, so we practiced "do the best you can with what you've got." I didn't know we were materially deprived, or different, because those things didn't matter. What mattered to me, at four years of age, was entering any unknown without my siblings -- a frightening prospect. School was an unknown; the beginning of "reality" as other people knew it, unlike my own innately cognizant and creatively balanced world. Kindergarten? Take a rug and take a nap ... learn the rules and you'll do fine ... two cents for white milk, three for chocolate. That September dragged on while teachers hovered to assure the completion of tasks, focusing on behavioral order, painfully oblivious to fun or adventure. I made the best of it.

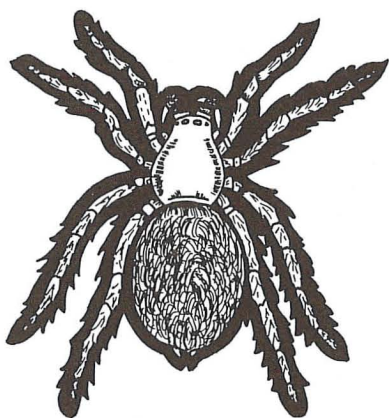
October and my fifth birthday came together. As each new day welcomed additional instruments in the forming symphony of color, my trek home changed. The pathway was filled with fallen leaves and discoveries of every sort, a certain one quite unexpected; a small dog was lying in the leaves. I reasoned that if Mom made my sicknesses go away, then she could do the same for him. Any medication delivered by the hands that pushed unruly wisps of hair gently from my eyes, mended each wound, and made every hurt go away, could certainly help that puppy. I carried him home.

Maybe I was experiencing some early stirrings of the healer within. Perhaps the innocent soul that believed in supernatural powers, who listened for sleigh bells on Christmas eve, saw beyond the stiffened, decaying corpse that filled my arms. I don't remember what Mom said when I offered her that eyeless, mange-ridden body. She probably disposed of it with as little repulsion or comment as possible. Of immediate concern to her was the child who would realize for the first time that her Mama was not omniscient, that a harsher reality existed than her knowledge or kisses and hugs could make "all better."

I've since learned, as an Emergency Medical Technician-Specialist, of a mercifully protective emotional barrier, one that holds reality at bay when viability won't be commanded into a lifeless form. Actuality dictates that in spite of intentions, equipment, knowledge or skill, a child who stays beneath the cold, murky waters of Lake Huron for three hours will not live. If a twelve year old boy has been hit by a van, introducing catheters, fluids and drugs into his veins,

intubating his trachea, forcing oxygen into his lungs and manually compressing his heart may not prolong his life. Sometimes, no matter how swiftly and expertly functions are performed, they may not result in what we perceive to be a positive outcome.

That autumn afternoon was more than thirty years ago, but I'm still trying to effect healing; the tools are shinier, the methods more technologically advanced and some results are accepted as being beyond mortal control. Experience can be the harshest of teachers; hard learned lessons are often unforgiving, depleting an inner store of innocence. The child has outwardly grown and gone, and there is wonder -- not fear -- in the unknown. I've come to believe in creating my own state of happiness, actively affecting my individual fate. Still hoping for the best in what is yet to be, the great secret is buried deeper but still remains, as the child within tenaciously and eternally clutches the tattered remnants of truth in the magic of Merlyn and Oz.



INSECT (spider)  
Jason Hendrick



## The Ballerina

by Michael LeFevere

There was only a silhouette, but that's all I needed. In a firefight time shifts gears like a runaway dragster. Before I knew it, without even thinking, I was cheek to cheek with Mary Jane. Peering down her long, slender body, I gave her a quick finger and she let out a metallic orgasm into the night. She gave just a little kick but a whole lot of bang. The hammer kissed the bullet's ass and all I saw was the purple shadow of his brains blowing out the back of his head and onto a tree a few feet behind. Frame by frame he spun gracefully full circle, arms outstretched, like a ballerina gliding across a snow-white stage. His comrades fired back and mine at them. After the brief exchange of the little pointed unpleasanties, I found myself lying in the cold staring out at the body, looking like a fallen Greek hero covered in marble. My face was just warm enough to allow a small grin for my success.

It was the border between the two Germanies, the crack of the world's ass and we were at the hole. Night patrol, and cold night it was. At that point the only thing that could warm me up was nice local girl, or a chance run-in with an East German patrol. On this night, unfortunately, I wouldn't get laid.

These run-ins happen from time to time. Two patrols, one from the east, one from the west, stumble into each other somewhere in the forest. No one really knows what to do except panic, so you find yourself ducking bullets. But you won't read about it in any newspaper. The brass keep these things covered real deep, and so does the other side. It's a good thing 'cause Mary Jane and I don't need the press. We're content to keep our little handiwork a tight, little secret. I don't want to be known as the guy who started World War III. But that's the way it's supposed to be. Soldiers don't start wars, politicians do.

When it was over, we re-grouped and circled the area, sweeping for stragglers or wounded. When we were convinced the enemy had vamoosed, we allowed our pulses to slow to normal. Someone commented on how nice a smoke would be about now to which the sergeant replied, "Good idea dumb fuck. While your at it, send up a flare." There could have been more unfriendlies on the way so we moved on I gripped Mary Jane's waist a little bit tighter.

The sergeant wanted to check the body and see if it was East German or possibly Russian. Like it mattered. I just wanted to gloat over my creation. I wanted to feel my buddies patting my back, their voices ringing with admiration. A couple souvenirs would fit the bill too. I'll take them home and give them to the girlies, they eat that shit up. You know the kind. They wait around the post hoping some G.I. will marry them and take them away from their dismal, rainy lives. What they don't know is, our lives are just as bad. That marriage thing is not for me, not now. At least not while I'm doing this for a living. I could end up like that poor fucker, lying in the snow with my head looking like

a broken bottle of ketchup. In the meantime, the worms and maggots haven't finished me off and some other guy is raising my kids and pumping my old lady. No thanks. For now, Mary Jane, with her little metal offspring, is the only gal for me.

We proceeded slowly, partly out of caution, partly because of the deep snow. The sergeant told us to be ready for anything, and we were. Mary Jane was weightless, cradled in my arms. I still had plenty of adrenalin left over. I was still pleased at my marksmanship back in the clearing. I'm ready to put a notch on my belt. The left side is for screws, the right side for kills. This would be the first on the right. With each step I noticed the cold less and less. I felt warm inside.

As we approached the clearing again, I started to wonder if he was really dead, even though I knew he was. We had to be quick about this. His buddies would be back for him soon, and we didn't need any more trouble. They might have wandered onto our side, or maybe we wandered onto theirs.

When we were close enough, I could see that the blood had already frozen into a thin sheet of crimson ice. It was shiny in the moonlight, surrounding his head like a glorious halo, almost beautiful. I couldn't help feeling like we were not alone. Like his soul was still there waiting for us to leave so it could escape unnoticed. In the bloody halo, it looked like hair was flowing from the shattered skull. Or maybe it was just his brains.

"I'll be damned," The sergeant was the first to the corpse. He stood there looking down, fingers scratching his chin. We all stood in a small circle looking down at the fallen soldier. It was hair flowing from the head. Pretty, thick, blond hair stained with blood. She couldn't have been more than twenty. She had a small, clean hole in her forehead and a gaping, terror-stricken one beneath her perfect, pale nose. Her lifeless eyes seemed to ask, "Why?"

That's what I wanted to know but there wasn't any politicians around to give me the answer. I stood there like a statue, but I didn't feel like a Greek hero. There was no sound, and the silence pierced my ears. The only movement was my heart pinballing around my chest and my stomach twisting in my gut. Suddenly Mary Jane felt like lead in my hands. The desire to drop her in the snow overcame me. For the first time in a long while I thought of my mother, my sister, the nameless girls back at the post. Do I believe in fate?

The sergeant's bark brought me from my dream, or perhaps my nightmare. I took one last look before I picked up my rifle. I marveled at how pretty she looked, even in that ugly uniform drenched in blood. I decided not to take any souvenirs with me. I'll always have the image of that ballerina, dancing her slow pirouette on the cold German border. That will last me long enough.

# Creative Writing, Cold Weather, and Mostly Tracey

## *First Place*

by William Spencer

It is the question my brain  
Has been fidgeting with for extended hours  
Will I win the acclaim of  
The word master?  
How long will my feet take to thaw  
As they grow blue and crack  
Like the snow  
Will I see you today?  
My Venus, Savior of Conversation  
A grand remedy for my lonely words  
And what about your acclaim?  
For younger days, there in the hallways,  
Proved silent as we were yet strangers  
But you built on my face a temple  
A smile  
In my faculties you conceived a memory  
And now too often you come knocking at  
My window under the shadow of the Lark  
Here in my soul you resurrected my hopes  
And I am forced to dream of you  
Warmth and morning embrace  
Tearful secrets shared that I wipe from your face  
Even splinters, asp like in nature  
That we send to each other via our mouths  
Mouths that breath fragile oaths and promise  
Mouths to kiss when night draws blinds of passion  
A mouth controlled by a mind that celebrates you  
A mouth too afraid to speak words like these....



HOUSE  
Jennifer Rockwell



# Crevecoeur: Idealizing the American Dream

## *Second Place*

by Susan Demeulenaere

Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, a transplanted Frenchman, was a great believer in the future of America. He promoted the idea that emigrants had the chance to create a good life in a free land. He thought America a land of great opportunity for anyone willing to work. He kept this optimistic viewpoint despite his own hardships, using his positive emotions to promote American settlement, as seen in his "Letters From an American Farmer," published in 1782.

Crèvecoeur believed Englishmen especially should be proud of American progress, even though he lists many other countries that sent settlers. He specifically pointed out that only the eastern provinces were unmixed descendants of England, having stated that Scotch, Irish, French, Dutch, German and Swede settlers varied the rest of the country to its benefit (158). In modern American society, immigrants from Japan, the Middle East, and other countries are bringing new ideas to the American workplace, which increases and varies our industrial knowledge.

Crèvecoeur thought the lack of an aristocracy in America was also to its benefit. He agreed with the idea that all people should be equal, but felt there must also be a strong work ethic. This is reflected in today's American society. Becoming wealthy through one's own efforts is regarded as a sign of strength, an American idea; in England new money is looked on with suspicion, while inherited wealth is thought to be a sign of aristocracy.

Crèvecoeur clearly showed through his writing that he felt farmers were the aristocracy of early America. He holds farmers up as the ideal for society. He admired how, in America, the entire family can help in the fields and none of the produce is taken by lords (159). He did not foresee the days of the government fixing produce prices, import and export goods giving farmers competition in their own country, and the industrial revolution relegating farmers to a much smaller importance to society. He talks of farmers being able to "till unrented, untaxed lands" (165), when farmers of today are burdened by taxation, like the rest of society, and renting farm land to till is common.

His ideas about creating a better land for one's children, having a good home with plenty to eat, and having the chance to improve oneself, are all parts of the traditional American dream. One's ability to achieve this dream is being threatened today, with high unemployment, crime, illiteracy, and skyrocketing housing costs putting the traditional American dream out of many people's reach. Crèvecoeur's stories about emigrants wanting to come to America, one even by diving off a boat naked (167), are reflected in today's world by the Haitian

boat people trying so desperately to leave their country for refuge in the United States. For all America's problems, to many people in the world, America is still the ideal place to live.

Crevecoeur used cultural stereotypes to describe groups of people, many of which are still in use today. The frugal Scot, the drunken Irishman, and the hardworking German are some of the slots into which he files emigrants (166). He uses these stereotypes as he goes into great detail about why certain groups are more likely to prosper than others in the new land, saying "...out of twelve families of emigrants of each country, generally seven Scotch will succeed, nine German, and four Irish" (166). These biases and others are still believed by many people today, and in the past have been the basis of many plays, books, and TV shows. When Crevecoeur wrote these ideas, they were to be read by people who had never known inhabitants of these countries, so they were more likely to be taken as true cultural traits. In today's American society one often works and socializes with people of many different racial backgrounds. This gives one the opportunity to see others as individuals, rather than as cultural stereotypes.

Another idea Crevecoeur wrote about was regional pride and identification. This concept holds true today, although it is becoming diluted due to families moving around the country, often as a job requirement. Even then, people identify the most with the area of the country in which they were born and raised. This can be seen in many countries, not just America, and the current wars in central Europe are partly based on defending regional pride and customs. America's Civil War was largely based on local pride and mores; one result of America surviving that was a creation of a stronger national pride. The writers of the Constitution relied on a stronger national pride. The writers of the Constitution relied on a new national pride to overcome territorial differences in order to pull all the states together. Crevecoeur recognized both types of pride. He gave the mixing of nationalities from different localities credit for creating a new breed of people proud of their new country, called Americans.

The idea of America being a melting pot is also described by Crevecoeur. He gives the example of "a family whose grandfather was an Englishman, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations" (159). This has been so common in America's past that now it is difficult to find anyone whose family has been in the United States for more than three generations to not have mixed blood. Crevecoeur believed this was to America's advantage, by creating a new race of Americans who would leave behind old prejudices and create a new style of life. This has been true to some extent, but there are many prejudices still remaining. In today's society there are still many people who believe races and religions should keep to themselves and not intermarry or even socialize together.

Crevecoeur believed the religion of America would become one of religious indifference. He wrote that anyone who was a "sober, peaceable, good citizen" (161) was religious enough. He felt this was another of America's advantages,

that people could worship as much or little as they pleased, without being beholden to a church. His ideas that settlers' children would be more indifferent to religion are not necessarily true. The Moral Majority has a strong voice in today's society, and many people do belong to a specific church. Crèvecoeur also felt that any odd sect would wear itself out due to religious indifference. His laissez faire attitude shows he did not foresee religious groups, such as the Branch Davidians or the Jonestown sect, preying on impressionable minds and involving children in their rituals. Americans are still very tolerant of religions in general. In America today there are more religions than can be easily counted; some of these religions believe one earns one's way to heaven, others still believe in predestination, and some are combinations of many religious ideas. Even long established churches such as the Roman Catholic Church are being challenged to defend their beliefs and rituals as not being reflective of today's society. Crèvecoeur might have approved of this; he seemed to feel society created religions, rather than religion creating society.

Crèvecoeur's writing style was open, easily understood, and meant to be read by the average person. He used language most people could understand, since he was praising America's advantages to the common man. He uses no statistics, only his own observations and emotions, to back up his ideas. What Crèvecoeur has written is not a sermon but an anthem, praising the freedom and opportunities of early America.



LONG AGO, TO A FAR PLACE  
Sheryl Ashford



STEPPING AWAY  
Nancy Ketcham



# The Whole Thing

## *First Place*

by Sara K. Ropposch

Even though she professed to hate David with every fiber of her being, Charlotte Thompson managed, somehow, to find herself near him all the time. It's funny how fate has a way of just sticking two people together who don't seem to go together at all; and yet it all manages to work out one way or another.

It started out innocently enough; Charlotte would slip out of the house at night when her parents were fighting and stroll on over to the Jackson's house with her fists buried deep in her coverall pockets. More often than not, she would find David, a lone, shadowy soul, already sitting on his back porch. He was a habitual night wanderer and he often became bored and climbed out of his bedroom window.

Over the course of a summer it happened that Charlotte slowly discovered a genuine person hiding behind David's cocky veneer. She found in him a comrade and close companion, and at times they were inseparable. David showed her a side of himself that he kept carefully hidden away from everyone else. This other half of David was no longer a boy, but a man who was passionate, intelligent, and thoughtful. He was really the only one who would patiently listen to Charlotte ramble on for hours; he was the only one who truly understood her point of view; he was the only one who actually liked the way she looked at things and people beyond their surfaces, for she had a more serious side too -- a side beyond the confident, independent girl she always tried to be.

Looking back now, Charlotte supposed it was because they had been more alike than they could have ever known, that they brought out the best in one another. They were the only two people who knew about these secret sides of themselves. It must have been this intimate knowledge of each other that eventually led to what happened that summer -- that wonderful summer of discovery, that summer that started the whole thing.

Charlotte sauntered down the hot dirt road, her shoulders back and her head bowed to keep the bright July sun from stinging her eyes. She knew her Mama would just about turn inside out if she could see her now: walking down that dusty road in her good Sunday dress and bare feet. Her patent leather dress shoes were clutched in one hand and the ribbon which had held her wildly curly brown hair in check was now draped over her shoulder. She watched as the dry, sandy soil puffed out from under her feet like smoke with every step she took.

"Hey, there, Charlotte Thompson, whatcha' up to?"

It was one such voice that she would have known anywhere, and it grated on her nerves to hear it on such a hot day, but something in Char made her turn around, despite her annoyance. The voice's owner sat lazily under the perfect shade of a spreading oak tree, his hand pulling up small tufts of grass as he stared at Char.

She glared at him tiredly as she put one hand on her bony hip. "I've had just 'bout 'nuff of you, David. Now, quit your jack-assin' around and leave me alone."

"Whoa-ho! That's big talk for such a little thing. Your mama'd have you bitin' the soap bar if she could hear ya right now."

"Now you listen here, David Jackson, I don't give a fig what my Mama would or wouldn't do! Besides that, it's none of your business!" Before David could come back at her with a retort of his own, she turned on her heel and walked briskly up the path, knowing that even though her mother hadn't heard what she had said, there would be a punishment for walking home from church in her good clothes.

She was supposed to have gotten a ride home from that awful Mr. Barnes who always looked like he'd lost his shaving razor and combed back his hair with what Charlotte decided must be at least a pound of lard. She had just plain made up her mind that she was sick and tired of watching him leer at her as he helped her into that rickety thing he called a car. For whatever strange reason, Char's mama seemed to trust him. She snickered to herself as she thought of the bewildered look on his face when she'd walked right past him. He'd yelled for a minute straight for Char to come back, and she even thought she'd detected a slight edge of panic in his voice. Who was he trying to impress, anyway?

Char walked cautiously up the front steps of the house, stopping momentarily to listen at the window for any sounds of her mother's stirring. She didn't hear anything so she went quickly in the house on the balls of her feet, cursing the creaky old screen door that banged and rattled behind. "Aw, shoot," she muttered disgustedly to herself, knowing full well that, for all the racket that door was making, she could have just yelled that she was home. She stopped in the middle of the kitchen floor and stuck out her lower lip to puff at a couple of stray hairs that had fallen down between her eyes. She stood there and waited for the inevitable holler from her mother and was not disappointed: It was only seconds before her Mama called to her from across the house.

"Char, is that you? You come here right now!"

"Be right there, Mama." Charlotte rolled her eyes; she was sick to death of uttering those words with just the right amount of obedience.

Char found her mother on her knees polishing the legs of the dining room table. Her mother looked up instinctively when Charlotte entered the room.

"God almighty, girl, you look like you been rollin' around with the pigs. How many times have I told you not to walk home in your good clothes, Charlotte? Sometimes I wonder why your father works so hard to put nice clothes on your back jus' so you can go and mess 'em up! Now, I want you to go straight

on upstairs and change into some clean work clothes, and when you get done with that, you can get the wash basin out from under the sink and wash those nice clothes that you got all dirty along with the other laundry that needs washin'. Then, Miss Charlotte, you can spend the rest of the day in your room without supper."

"But, Mama..."

"I don't want to hear any of that lip now, Char. You're wearin' my patience awfly thin." Her voice had taken on that dangerous you're-pushing-me-too-far tone, and so Char went straight to her work without another word.

Charlotte stood in the kitchen; she'd given up washing clothes a long time ago. Every once and a while when she heard the right combination of creaks on the floor, she would start grinding the clothes on the washing board like she had been working hard at it all along, but when she knew the danger was past, she would commence staring at the beautiful, golden wheat. The sun was at that just-right level where it seems to bathe everything in pure honey. It was during moments like these that Char dreamt of finding a different life. She could picture herself running like hell through those fields without a second glance and never coming back; it would be so simple to just open up that door and run away forever.

Sometimes this vision of Charlotte's changed: There were days when she saw herself planning everything carefully. She would calmly go upstairs at night, pull the carpet bag from under her bed, wrap some food in a cloth, then stroll out the door and down the road as if nothing had ever happened. She saved money in a small tin in her dresser, specifically for this purpose, and she counted it each week, but somewhere in the back of her mind, she feared she would never be able to bring herself to leave, or at least, she would never go very far. It wasn't that she was at all worried about how her parents would take it if they found her missing. It was her Grandma Mills' feelings that she was concerned about. Viola Mills was the only person in the whole house to whom Charlotte felt at all close. She was bedridden and sick, but Char found comfort and wisdom in the rheumy eyes that had once been a sharp brown.

Char was startled from her reverie by two raps on the screen door, and she turned quickly only to see David's lanky body leaning in the doorway; he'd already let himself into the kitchen. His arms were folded across his chest and he had a mischievous smirk on his face. David could tell by Charlotte's large, round eyes that he had given her a scare, and he wanted to see just how far he could push her.

"Hey, there, darlin', looks like you got a fair piece of scrubbin' to do. I just love watchin' women work."

"You are so low, David, so pitifully low." She spat out her words in an angry hiss. "Whatcha' think you're doin, anyhow? Prowlin' round here like a big ol' cat." She now spoke sullenly into her laundry as she started to pull the clothes through the wringer. "Who let you loose anyway? You scared the livin' piss outta me!"



"Ooooh! Ooooh! Such harsh abuse!" He looked around as if suspicious of something, then he lowered his voice in a confidential tone. "You'd better watch what you say. The walls have ears around here." He raised his eyebrows twice in rapid succession.

Char couldn't help but smile. "David, you big galoot, you'd best get out of here while you still can before my Mama comes after you with her dust rag and mop; she's in a mighty wicked mood."

"Yeah... guess I'd better be on my way then. Wouldn't want to get hit on the backside with a mop. I might break it. `Sides, your mama never did like me much. Oh! I came to ask if you'd care to go fishin' tonight."

"Can't. I'm grounded."

"Ah, don't worry. I'll getcha' out." He gave her a quick wink and was out the door before she could protest.

That evening, Char sat in her room without dinner, supposedly to remind her to never walk home in her church clothes again. She had gotten the speech on becoming an adult and how Mama should be able to trust Char to look after herself while she cared for Grandma. It was the same lecture Char had gotten a million and one times, and she often mouthed the words as her mother ranted and raved while pacing in front of her. These meetings always ended with Charlotte being accused of mocking her mother, and finally getting sent back to her room.

Char sat on her bed, her chin resting on her knees which she hugged close to her body. The room was almost completely dark except for the slight glow of the oil lamp whose wick she had purposely turned way down; something about the darkness was always soothing to her. Downstairs, her parents had already begun their argument of the evening. Harsh fragments floated upstairs to Char's bedroom, and she hoped to God that her grandmother couldn't hear them.

"I work twelve hours a day breakin' my back for this family. It hardly seems too much to ask that you fix somethin' I like for dinner! If you think I'm wrong, Millie, you just give me the signal. I'd be more than happy to tell Andy Vincent where he can put his machine parts."

"Do you honestly think that you are the only one who works hard around here?" her mother replied, then she named off all the things she did each week to contribute to the family. Charlotte heard the all-too-familiar sound of her mother crying, and her father swearing as he slammed out the back door.

Char cupped her hands over her ears. "Shut up, shut up, shut up!" she chanted to herself through gritted teeth. Just when she felt she couldn't endure any more of the incessant yelling, her relief came in the form of a handful of dirt and gravel hurled at a pane of glass. She ran to the window and forced its resistant wooden frame upward. Down below, David stood doing a clumsy, fake tapdance routine. It was, she knew, for her benefit. He ended with a



flourish, his arms outspread, the palms of his hands reaching skyward. Char swung her legs over the rough windowsill, grabbed a rubbery tree branch, and rode gently down to earth to be delivered to David's waiting arms.

"Hiya, Doll!"

"David Jackson, you are so full of it, it's not even funny."

David gave her his best naive look and asked innocently, "Now, full of what, exactly? What could you be referrin' to, Miss Thompson?" David put Charlotte on the ground and handed her a home-made fishing pole. Over the years he had become a master in the art of pole construction; he managed, somehow, to find the most perfect, limber branches for his creations, and they caught fish beautifully.

The two walked on in silence till the weeds and tall grasses gave way to the reeds and cattails that fringed the pond behind their houses. They settled on the bank, baited their hooks, and cast their lines into the calm water. David watched a lightning bug go slowly by on invisible wings. Somewhere a junebug buzzed and a few wood frogs decided to harmonize. For a long time he stared into the evening sky. When the moment seemed right, he let his voice enter the silence.

"So, how's everything with you? Was it bad tonight?"

"Not any worse than other nights, I guess. Basically the same old fight as always, 'cept with a slight twist. Pop never thinks Ma works hard enough, then she gives him a run-down of all the things she does. He cusses, she finally breaks down and cries, and he slams out the back door to walk it off. See, Pop thinks Mama spends too much of her time tendin' to Grandma, and I have to listen to them hash it out. Sometimes I wish they'd both go away. Sounds pretty awful, doesn't it?"

"No, not really. There's times in everyone's life when they need to get away, Charlotte. Why'd you think I slink around at night so much?" This question was meant more for pondering, so she didn't answer.

Char stole a glance at David's profile. She'd never noticed the strong, clean lines of his face before. Strange -- she and David had known each other for ages, but she couldn't exactly recall when he had begun the ascent to manhood. It seemed as though it had happened over night, but she wasn't the only one who had noticed; he had noticed changes in her too, and though he tried not to admit it, he couldn't claim to be immune to their charms. She quickly cast her eyes to the ground so as not to be caught staring. She cleared her throat. "I, um, should be gettin' back home before they find I'm missin' and I get myself deeper than I already am."

David put his arm around her shoulder and gave it a reassuring little squeeze. "It'll be all right, Charlotte. Everything gonna be just fine... C'mon, I'll walk ya home."

There was more meaning in those words than David ever realized, and Charlotte was comforted and oddly touched by their gentle message.

The summer melded into a chain of dull days; it was the lazy nights of swimming, fishing, and talking that seemed to last so long and hold so much promise. It was when the sky turned dark that Charlotte learned to hope -- everything seemed so right, so even. The darkness was forgiving; it let her forget who she was. She didn't have to be anyone... not anyone at all.

During the day, she found herself daydreaming a lot. At these moments of drifting thoughts, her mind always managed to move itself around to the subject of David. Aspects of him cluttered her thoughts at odd times: She'd pictured his lop-sided smirk while washing dishes, see the way his eyes disappeared when he smiled as she weeded the garden, or hear his deepening Southern voice just before she succumbed to sleep at night. She always ignored the quickening down her spine when these images crowded her head. It never occurred to her to think of her unique closeness with David as more than just friendship. In fact, the only two people who didn't seem to notice what was happening were David and Charlotte.

Char walked home from the library, her books clutched tightly to her chest. She heard a thumping sound coming from the dusty road behind her, and turned just in time to see David sprinting nimbly along to catch up to her. He was polishing a large red apple on his shirt front.

"Hi, Char."

Immediately, Charlotte felt suspicious. He never used the shortened version of her name, and he never said "hi." Instead, it was always something like "Hey, there, Charlotte," or "Hiya, darlin'," or any number of smart-ass greetings.

"Are you up to somethin', David?"

He placed both hands over his heart and scrunched up his face in pseudo pain. "That hurt, Charlotte. You cut me to the quick, girl." He then bent close to her ear and spoke in silken, devilish tones. "Would you prefer it if I were lewd and crude? I love it when you're angry!"

Char swatted at his face. "Wouldya just cut it out! You are the most impossible human being I know!"

"Why, thank you, Miss Charlotte. I certainly try." He studied his apple for a second as if contemplating its structure, then took a bite and handed it over to Char. Without hesitating, she bit from the same spot he had eaten away.

"I betcha', Charlotte, that I could beat ya to the swimming hole."

"Oh, yeah? And what do I get if I beat you?"

"I'll buy ya a phosphate at the drugstore."

"Awright, smartass, yer on. Just let me know when." She dropped her books along the side of the road, and pulled off her shoes and socks to let him know she was serious.

"Okay, on three. One, two... THREE!"

They ran neck and neck, their legs straining, their arms pumping. David pulled ahead of Char and cannon-balled into the water, and Char followed. She sucked the warm air into her lungs, and dove under one more time. The

water was like a cool blanket on her heat-parched skin. Suddenly, she was pulled under the water by David, and the two horsed around as if they had magically become little kids again.

Charlotte lay propped up on her elbows in the tall grass with her eyes closed. Her long hair was drying in frizzy ringlets. The sun's warmth always made her sleepy after swimming. She was in a pondering sort of mood.

"David, whata ya dream of doing someday?"

"I don't know. I just always figured I'd get out of this crummy town first, and think about the rest later, but I do know for sure that I don't wanna work on a farm or in some factory or hardware store like everyone else's Pop is doin' these days. I wanna do somethin' that matters. Seems like all these people just wander through life without ever figurin' out who they really are, or what life means to 'em. When my Dad get harrangin' on my Ma, I hafta wonder what he'd be doin' right now if he'd only done what he wanted when he was young, and I can tell ya right now, it sure as hell ain't workin' twelve hours to support five kids and a wife. Ya know, sometimes I can see what he musta looked like before he got old and tired, and I feel really sorry for that young man; he didn't know what he was gettin' into."

Charlotte remained silent. Even after knowing David for fourteen years, it still shocked her every time he was profoundly serious. He was more intelligent than he let others know. At times it was almost as if he was afraid people would use his intelligence against him, and who knew? Maybe they would.

As the days grew shorter, and fall began to settle in, David and Char found themselves together more and more, and they each realized, privately, that as much as they harassed and cajoled each other, they secretly enjoyed the company.

It was becoming harder and harder to stay apart for very long. By the time school rolled around, they had established a daily ritual of going for long walks. Oftentimes, the day would sink into night without either one of them even noticing the transformation until the moon glowed overhead.

That autumn, the halls of Grant High School were abuzz with a rumor: Everyone was saying that David Jackson was dating Charlotte Thompson. All the careless talk quickly got back to David, and it hit him like a ton of bricks -- he loved Charlotte; he truly loved her. She had burst out of the chrysalis of childhood some time ago and emerged a beautiful, young woman. Every time he was around her lately, he believed his thudding heart loud enough to give away his thoughts. He had been telling himself that he couldn't possibly be feeling the way he was for Charlotte -- she was his childhood friend for gosh sakes! And here he was now; he could no longer deny what was so unavoidably the truth: the waters ran much deeper than friendship.

Char sat on the edge of her bed, dusk was settling in, the moon taking over rights from the sun. In her mind, thoughts tumbled over and over in a continuous chain; she had a lot to mull over. One of her friends at school had confided in her that she "knew all about Char and David." When Char had shown her surprise, Anna had gone on to tell her how practically the whole



school believed that Char and David were "an item." At the time, Charlotte was wont to be indignant that anyone would surmise so much. After all, they were just friends... or were they? Now, when she had time to think about it by herself, she had to wonder: Do I love him? Has he become a significant part of my life? The answers to these questions came very easily, and she knew with complete clarity that she did indeed love him.

This answer didn't come in words, but in images -- all the things that she loved about him: his infectious laughter, the way his eyes crinkled up when he smiled, his soft voice, the way he towered over her, but with the realization came sadness. A final decision to leave home for good had already been made. She needed to find a life that offered more hope, more promise; she needed to escape the constant bickering of her parents. Char knew if she didn't leave soon, she never would.

Charlotte walked down the hall to her grandmother's room, and poked her head around the doorframe. Her grandma was sitting in bed crocheting; this was one of her "better days." Grandma Mills had managed to work around her poor sight to a certain degree, and when she was feeling well enough, she crocheted.

"Gramma?"

"Charlotte, come in, come in, Child."

Char sidled in and sat gingerly on the edge of the bed.

"What's on your mind, Char? I kin feel the tension in the air. What's eatin' ya up?"

"I, uh, made a decision tonight..."

"Go on."

Charlotte swallowed. She couldn't think of any way to get around it or to soften it, so she just said it, "I'm leavin' home. I have a little money tucked away.... I don't wanna work on a farm all my life. I wanna see what's out there. But there's a problem. Do you remember David Jackson from next door?"

"Yes, I believe I remember who he is. You love 'im?"

"How did you know?"

"The way you speak -- I kin just tell. I was young once too, don't forget. I remember what it's like... fallin' in love for the first time.... What a wonderful feelin'!"

"I don't wanna hurt 'im.... I feel so helpless."

"Charlotte, I wanna tell ya somethin'. Ya gotta take chances as they come along. Sometimes it hurts. Sometimes it breaks your heart. Ya gotta take 'em when they come along, though. Some of 'em come along only once. Opportunity awaits ya just outside that screen door, Charlotte. Don't let yourself get stuck here. If this boy truly loves ya -- he'll understand. I wanna give ya somethin' for your trip. Behind the first dresser drawer there's a sock with some bills folded in it. Take it all. I don't need it anymore."

Char eased the drawer out of the dresser and pulled out the sock. She found a wad of dollar bills folded inside; it must have been more than two hundred dollars. Her eyes became huge.



"Oh, Gramma, I can't take all this money."

"Course you can, Charlotte. I don't wanna hear another word of it."

"Thanks." She kissed the cool forehead.

"You just be sure ya write."

"Oh, I will, don't worry. I love you Gramma."

Charlotte opened her window wide and leaned into the cool, rainy evening air. Deciding to leave was the hardest thing she'd ever done, but she knew at the same time that she must go through with it if she ever hoped to do something with this "go nowhere" life. Her grandma's words were like a stone in her mind. She had to let David know that she was leaving and she had to let him know soon.

David sat next to Char on the bottom step of his back porch. They both had their legs stretched out before them. On this particular night, she had sought him out. He felt unusually nervous, but he wasn't sure why. This night wasn't any different from any of the many other nights they'd spent together, yet something was different all the same. He couldn't help but notice that the moonlight was hitting Charlotte just right, so that it etched her features in silver. He wanted to kiss her; he wanted to tell her how he felt about her.

Charlotte made a mental struggle to collect her thoughts. How could she tell him that tomorrow she would walk out of his life for good? The train ticket was already paid for. When she finally spoke, she somehow felt the need to whisper.

"David, I don't know of any easy way to tell ya this, so I'll just say it out: I leave tomorrow afternoon for Atlanta on the 5:00 train. I hear there's lotsa new businesses opening up there and they're willin' to train. Teach me to type and everything...." The words wouldn't stop; they kept pouring from her mouth.

David was shocked. He wasn't exactly sure what to say. He knew he should congratulate her, but he couldn't bring himself to say the words, so he said the first thing that came to mind: "I sure will miss ya, Charlotte, but I don't want you to go before..."

"Before what, David?"

"Before... I get to tell ya how head-over-heels I've fallen for ya. What I'm tryin' ta say is I'll really, really miss ya, Char. I don't know what I'll do when you're gone. I'll miss those big brown eyes; I'll miss that smile, and the dimple that appears every time you find somethin' funny. I wish I'd told ya sooner."

"I'll miss ya too, David. It breaks my heart to have to say goodbye, but I can't stay, either."

"I know, and I understand. I'm just sayin' it's gonna be awful hard for awhile."

"It sure is." There was a long, uncomfortable pause. "Well... I should move along toward home. I still have some packing to do."

"Yeah... I'll, ah, walk ya home."

At Char's back door, she and David fell into another silence. Their feelings were beyond words. He wanted so badly to kiss her; she wanted to be kissed. Finally, they collided in slow motion. She tilted her face up toward his and he bent to meet her lips. It was a brief kiss, but all the same -- still passionate and it left Charlotte a bit dazed. "Well, Goodnight."

David smiled down at her. "Night."

David stood before Charlotte on the platform. A few other people milled about, but to him it seemed as if she were the only one there. He reached out and clasped her small hand in his own. He felt reluctant to let it go -- let her go, but he knew he had to. His heart fluttered and skipped around for a few moments. He realized, with a bit of amazement that this was what he'd wanted all along: to hold her hand, to call her his own. It was surprising to him how very right it all seemed and he suddenly couldn't imagine life without Charlotte.

She looked so small and fragile all of a sudden as she stood in front of the steaming locomotive -- so much bigger than she -- all her hopes, dreams, possessions contained within the carpet bag in her hand.

"G'bye, Charlotte. You take care of yourself. Don't let anybody try an' tell ya what ta do." On an impulse, he bent forward and enfolded her in his arms. He could hear her breath in his ear; then he heard something different: A faint "I love you," just loud enough for him alone to hear was spoken. Char turned and climbed on board the train and when she was seated, she gave a small wave from her window. She was sort of glad that David wasn't standing too close to the train. She knew from that distance he couldn't see the glistening wetness of her cheeks.

David suddenly wanted to cry, but he couldn't -- not here, not in front of all these people. He watched the train pull away from the station, until it was a tiny speck of black in the distance.

"G'bye," he said once more under his breath, then he turned and headed home.



BACTERIA  
Laura Seely

# Sorrowful Happiness

by Deanna B. Arnot

Blue plate specials, with  
blueberry pie on the side.

Cornflowers growing everywhere  
under Carolina blue skies.

Blue cotton candy, fluffy like clouds,  
bring happiness to the child.

Blue haired old ladies,  
watch with icy stares.

Blue jays screaming overhead,  
hide the bruises' cries.

Salty blue oceans wash,  
the inkstains from the heart.

Blue jeans, Blue suede, Blue moods,  
washed away by the tinkling of the streams.

Blue eyes ever watchful,  
for sadness in the child.



# No Flowers Please - Family Request

*First Place*

by Randa L. Colby

A flower -- a song -- a park, these may bring back a memory. The month of March brings back a memory for me. March can bring weather in Michigan. March may bring days with sunshine and the promise of new life in spring, only to have a snow storm or rain the next day. Whatever the weather may be in March, I will feel cold. On March 24, 1987, I received a phone call advising of my father's death. He died in an auto accident.

On March 23, 1987, my father called me during the evening. Three times during the conversation he spoke of the future, and his chance to make up for mistakes of the past. My mother and father had divorced when I was a child, and he was now divorcing my stepmother. My father was eager to correct errors he believed he had made during my childhood, and wanted to make restitution to my brother and me. With eagerness he made plans for Jay and me, and what he would give us, and how we would spend time together. With sadness he spoke of my childhood, wishing he could have those lost moments back. The most important feeling he shared was his love, and his desire to change his relationship with Jay and me. Those words of love would give me the courage to endure the next two days.

The property owned by my father and stepmother was in Black River, and Hubbard Lake, Michigan. Marge, my stepmother, was staying in the home at Hubbard Lake, and Dad the home in Black River. After Jay and I received the phone call advising of our father's death, we left our homes in lower Michigan, believing we would make the funeral arrangements when we arrived in Black River. Marge, arriving in Black River before us, moved into Dad's home, and made all the necessary funeral arrangements. Tension between the three of us made it impossible for Jay and me to stay in the home; therefore, we took up residence in a local motel.

Black River is a small town with only one funeral home. The funeral home sits quietly on the top of a hill overlooking the trees of the countryside. This serene setting should have given comfort, but instead, my brother and I encountered a funeral arrangement that could have come from a Stephen King novel. When Jay and I stepped into a large room arranged for mourners, we found rows of neatly lined metal folding chairs. The mourners sat quietly with looks of bewilderment and sadness on their faces. I turned toward the front of the room expecting to see a hill of green plants with a waterfall of white flowers from well wishers surrounding a casket. A bronze casket with white puffs of

satin gently hugging the body inside. Instead I found one five by seven inch picture of my father. Five feet away from the picture was a black and white sign larger than my father's picture with a bold print directive: "No flowers please, family request." We were stunned by the bareness of the room, and the coldness of the arrangements. The room should have been a place of final good-byes, but instead was an environment of mockery. Our appearance gave the confused mourners a way to say good-bye to our father. Single file, they each approached Jay and me, and gave their condolences. Graciously, Jay and I accepted their words, but we both felt like puppets without a mind controlled by a master. We needed a way to prove his existence and a way to accept the death of our father. Legally, we did not have the right to request to view our father, but we felt if we explained our feelings to the funeral director, he would allow us to see him for just a few minutes. Both of us believed if we could view the body we would be able to accept his death, and it would help us endure the pain felt from a single picture and a directive: "No flowers please, family request." Permission had to be obtained from Marge before Jay and I could be allowed just a few minutes viewing our father's body; therefore, the director called Marge and obtained the necessary permission.

The director sheepishly asked us to put our coats on because we would be walking to another building. Leaving the funeral home, we walked toward a shed turned grey with age. The windows did not have curtains, and the siding was in need of paint. There were large scratches on the wood near the door as though someone had trouble putting some equipment in the shed. The director pulled the small windowless door open for Jay and me to enter. The shed was cold from lack of heat, and there were no light switches. Stepping into the shed was difficult because of the wall-to-wall junk. The director picked up two black garbage bags that had been carelessly tossed in the path. Sitting idle waiting for summer was a lawn mower with dark green stains from many years of use. To the right blocking our path was a pink girl's bicycle with training wheels. To the left sitting lifeless was a black 1953 Buick covered with dust. The director pushed the lawn mower to the right beside the bicycle so Jay and I could walk toward the back of the shed. My heels were out of place, and I felt as though the stirred dust was clinging to my nylons and coat.

At the back of the shed looking foreign in this dusty surrounding stood a shiny table with a cardboard box on top. This box was like any other cardboard box. The color was brown, but the finish was waxy. Cardboard boxes usually have flaps to close the top, but this box had a lid. Without looking at Jay or I, the director lifted the lid. This plain, brown, cardboard box was different. Inside lay our father. The body in the box had dried blood on the cheek, mouth, and nose. The mouth was in a grimace as if the feeling of pain was the last utterance. His hands were clutched, but held nothing. The silver watch on his wrist was still ticking. His blue shirt was pulled out at the waistline, and ink blob patterns of blood covered the chest. A gold belt buckle proclaimed his name for anyone who cared to look. I could not make myself touch his

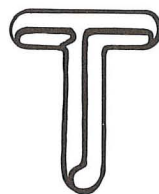
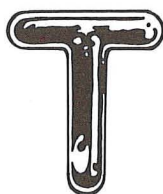
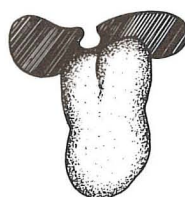
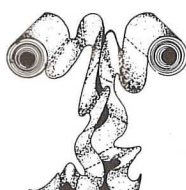
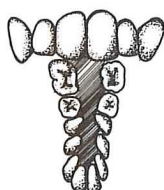
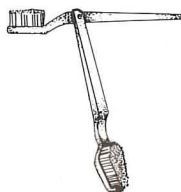
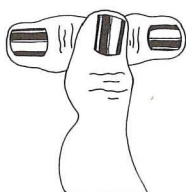
body; instead, I looked at the watch as it ticked away time. Tears swelled in my eyes, and a deep ache took away my ability to breathe. Yet I could not look away. I became a prisoner of feelings, cold sadness, ache, sorrow, and emptiness. After minutes of silence, the emotional turmoil inside me gave me the strength to leave. I turned and walked away, leaving my father in the cardboard box, in a dusty shed, and in a bloody frozen panic. Stepping outside into the March weather, I remembered thinking how cold and wet March weather can make a person feel.

Early on the morning of March 26, 1987 our father's body was moved. The brown cardboard box was taken to Pontiac, Michigan. In the afternoon the body was cremated. The next morning the ashes were placed in a local cemetery. All arrangements had been made by my stepmother. Today, we have only a memory of our father.

Unusual things stir up memories. March weather will haunt me for a long time. Cold wet weather will seep into my being, and create an ache that brings memories and tears. The greyness of March will always bring a box, brown, with a waxy finish -- and a lid.



FOUR #2  
Dave Thompson



"T" TIME  
Laura Ashley



# Slasher Films: Voyeurism, Vengeance and Societal Reflections

## *Second Place*

by Robert Golm

Let's imagine that the world as we know it was devastated by a global catastrophe of some sort, and one hundred years after the fact, archeologists start rummaging through the remains of our civilization. As they make their way through the debris, they stumble upon what once was a large video store filled with movies from every genre accompanied by a plethora of catchy and not so catchy titles. Continuing their investigation, they stumble across the horror section of the store and a sub-genre entitled "slasher films." Back at their campsite, they start to view some of the cinematic offerings. Cringing at what unfolds on the screen in front of them, the archeologists witness psychopaths and sociopaths reveling in a smorgasbord of human slaughter and multiple mutilations all gleefully accomplished with the aid of either chainsaws, machetes, or butcher knives. As the carnage unfolds, they wonder "what the hell is this seemingly mindless desecration of human flesh suppose to symbolize? Is it; A) popular entertainment for a certain segment of society, if so who? B) Is it exploitation of a sex, or C) perhaps something deeper?"

Ever since the insurgence of the horror film into American popular culture, it has served as a reflection of the societal fears of that particular time. In the 1950's the classic "big bug" films (such as *Them* and *The Beginning of the End*) echoed the cold war mentality by offering a visceral response to nuclear threat. Other films such as *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* and *The Thing* mirrored our indulgences into anticommunist hysteria by combating alien life forms which threatened "the American way of life." In the late sixties and early seventies the zombie marked its return in a much more contemporary mode than their early voodoo induced brethren of the thirties and forties. This is due largely in part to George A. Romero's cult classic *Night of the Living Dead*. They (the zombies) are the ultimate liberal nightmare, the huddled and mindless masses of conformity yearning to breathe free.

The 1980's brought forth a "new" era of monsters and mayhem. The wolfman has been de-clawed, Dracula de-fanged, and Frankenstein merely a Hollywood novelty of bygone years. Plagiarized and pushed into sentimental limbo, they are replaced by a congregation of psychotic slash-n-bash maestros starring in what is collectively called in cinematic jargon "slasher or splatter films." The plot formulas are usually simplistic and most aim for (and achieve) the lowest denominator in entertainment (after all that is part of the film's appeal). Take a certain number of attractive high school or college age men and women and put them into a dark or shadowy place. Now, intrude into that erotic setting

the presence a maniac with a knife, axe, clever, chainsaw, or what have you. Let the camera caress every shadow for as long as possible while the young people caress each other, untill the killer kills brutally, ingeniously, swiftly, spilling as much blood as possible.

There is little argument concerning the popularity of these movies, especially among teenagers (mostly male according to statistics). Certainly, the two most popular movie slashers of the eighties (Micheal Myers of *Halloween* 1,2,3,4,5 and Jason from the (count em) nine *Friday the 13th* films) bear this out. Altogether these two film series have grossed more than 350 million dollars at the box office and video rental sales. Why are these films so popular? According to Robin Cook, "The satisfaction that youth audiences get from these films is presumably two fold: they identify with both the promiscuity and with the grisly and excessive punishment" (Wood 196). Another reason for their popularity may rest in the notion that the films offer the viewer a "safe" formulated way of playing with death. They like to be scared. Fear is fun.

The early horror films notwithstanding, slasher films are also steeped in (although somewhat limited) reactionary themes. In the words of Douglas E. Winter; "Conventional horror has always been rich with puritan subtext: if there is a single certainty, it is that teenagers who have sex in cars or in the woods will die. Most books and films of the eighties offer a message as conservative as their morality: conform. The bogeymen of the Halloween and Friday the 13th films are the hitmen of the homogeneity. Don't do it, they tell us, or you will pay an awful price. Don't party. Don't make love. Don't dare be different" (Winter 14).

Unlike the horror films of the thirties, forties and fifties, it is not silver bullets or crucifixes that ward off this breed of monster, but rather moral and good behavior. Their nemesis is not always a burly handsome hero, but rather monogamous or virginal heroine who holds true to the teachings of her middle class conservative parents. One piece of evidence to back this up is Jamie Lee Curtis' prudish character (Laurie Strobb of the first two *Halloween* films) not only survives, but succeeds in stopping or killing the madman. Likewise, with the *Friday the 13th* movies, a majority of the time Jason is stopped by a virtuous young woman. In fact, in *Friday the 13th Part Seven* Jason's nemesis is a young woman trying to help her father. A rather interesting side note to slasher films is that their popularity rose and peaked during the Reagan and Bush presidencies.

The primary objection to these films seems to come from anybody and everybody connected or unconnected with the realm of mass media entertainment. Many of these individuals have their own interpretation of what exactly is transpiring throughout the movie and mostly to whom. Many critics such as Siskel and Ebert argue that the first person tracking shot used extensively in these films to signify the approach of the killer is an invitation to sadistic indulgence on the part of the viewer. However, *Halloween* (a film both men praised) was one of the very first slasher films to use this first person tracking

shot. According to Robin Cook, "The sense of indeterminate, unidentified, possibly supernatural or superhuman menace feeds the spectator's fantasy of power, facilitating a direct spectator/camera identification by keeping the intermediary character, while signified as present, as vaguely defined as popular" (Carroll 108). The counter-argument to this is that the film makers need to preserve the secret of the killer's identity for a final surprise ending.

Another criticism, perhaps the biggest, centering on slasher films is that the violence is allegedly directed mostly at women. Some critics cite the fact that the audience for these films is comprised overwhelmingly of males. Their theory for this is that the men secretly sympathize and bond with the killer in his hatred of women and in the killing of them. However, arguments persist in contradiction to this. One, there is no significant difference in ratio between numbers of men killed to women in these films. The demise of the victims seem to be based more on circumstance and their ensuing actions rather than gender. Two, some of the killers (admittedly a small number) turn out to be women. *Friday the 13th Part One* is a strong example. Three, no scenes were observed involving nonconsenting sexual aggression (i.e. rape) being committed by either slasher or other actors. Four, women in the early days of horror films were always portrayed as the helpless and hapless victims, most of which were rescued by the man/hero of the movie. In modern slasher films, the women (usually virtuous) are the ones who are the heroes because they stop the killers. It is Jody Foster's independent character in *Silence of The Lambs* whose courage and intelligence stops the reign of terror by "Buffalo Bill."

In conclusion, what the slasher film represents is merely a phase, much like many other phases in American horror cinema that have come and gone. The novelty of slasher films is wearing thin and soon will undoubtedly be replaced by another breed of "monster." However, like those early horror films which reflected many of society's fears at the time, slasher films will continue to be at the focus of controversy lead by condescending media personalities preaching movie "morality."

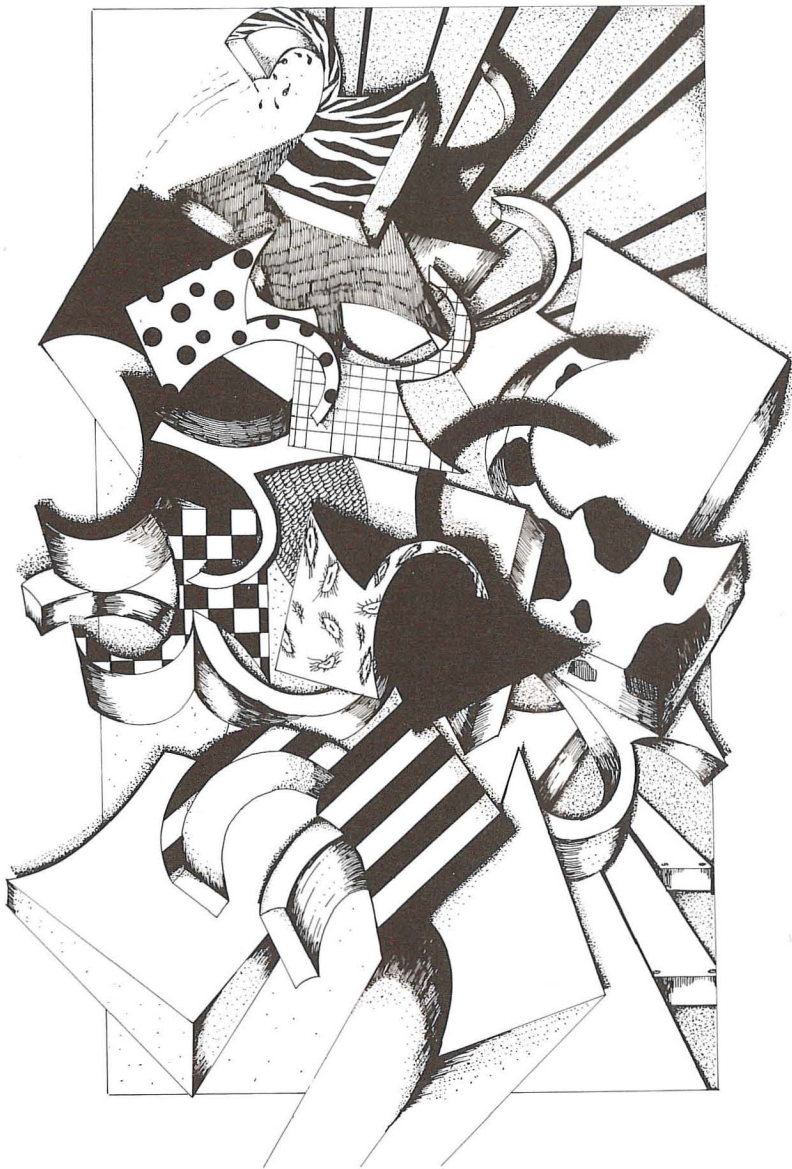
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PATTERNS  
Evelyn Grzadzinsk



## "A Wagner Matinee": One Interpretation

by Diane O'Neill

Deep in the center of every human being lies a passion, the spark burning always, refusing to be extinguished by any wind of circumstance.

In "A Wagner Matinee," Willa Cather introduces us to Aunt Georgiana, an elderly woman transplanted thirty years before from Boston to the plains of Nebraska. From Cather's description, the spark has not only been extinguished in this woman; she has all but withered up and blown away on the dry, dusty winds of the frontier: "...her shoulders were now almost bent together over her sunken chest...her skin was as yellow as a Mongolian's from constant exposure to a pitiless wind and to the alkaline water which hardens the most transparent cuticle into a sort of flexible leather."

Georgiana has returned to Boston after an absence of thirty years to tend to the affairs of a deceased relative. She is met upon her arrival by her nephew, Clark, who had grown up on the farm in Nebraska with his aunt and uncle. During his years with them, he had known the hard work of the land, but his fondest memories were of his aunt, who had been a music teacher in Boston in the years before her marriage to Howard Carpenter, a man ten years her junior. Howard had taken her to the frontier to homestead, leaving behind the music, culture and amenities she had grown up with and loved. While Clark lived with them, she spent long evenings nurturing her love of the arts by imparting that love to her nephew, teaching him to play the organ, read Latin, and care for Shakespeare. She often sang to him but almost never talked of her life as a music teacher or her deep love for music itself. Her pain at having left it all in the past is reflected in a rare comment to Clark as he practices at the organ. "Don't love it so well, Clark, or it may be taken from you. Oh, dear boy, pray that whatever your sacrifice may be, it be not that." Her sacrifice must have been made even more painful with Clark's eventual departure from the farm. Her last student gone, the grey life of the plains overtakes her.

When Clark sees his aunt once more, the realization of all that has passed overwhelms him, and he begins to regret the plans he has made to take Georgiana to a Wagner concert. What he had thought might be a gift, a token of the love and respect he has always had for this woman, becomes a doubt in his mind. He is afraid that it might after all be almost cruel, to give her a brief moment, a memory, of all that she had once loved. But they attend the matinee after all, and he begins finally to understand the nature of the passion of his kinswoman.

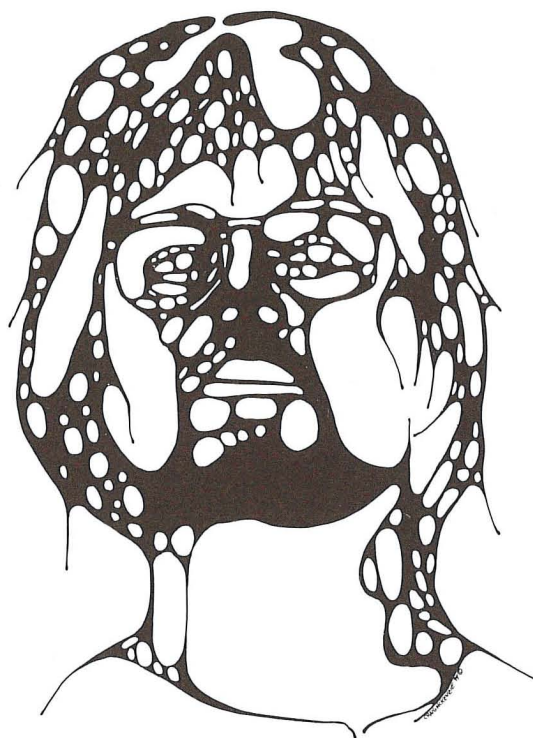
Cather describes Aunt Georgiana's reaction to the experience at first as one of detachment. "She sat looking about her with eyes as impersonal, almost as stony, as those with which the granite Rameses in a museum watches the froth and fret that ebbs and flows about his pedestal - separated from it by the lonely

stretch of centuries." She seems unaffected by the audience, almost entirely unaware of the dozens of women sitting row after row in dresses of myriad hues, "all the colors that an impressionist finds in a sunlit landscape." It is apparent that her love was never of the environment in which music placed her. Her first true reaction comes when the orchestra takes its place on the stage. At the sound of the first strains of the Tannhauser overture, she clutches her nephew's coat sleeve but makes little other motion. Through one piece after another she sits still, except for her fingers, moving against her skirt as if she were playing a piano along with the orchestra. Clark notices the twisted fingers and takes one of her hands in his, remembering the things these hand had done for him in days long past.

The dam burst as the tenor began to sing the Prize Song. Georgiana was crying, silently, tears on her cheeks, and suddenly Clark wept too, as the realization came to him. "It never really died, then - the soul that can suffer so excruciatingly and so interminably; it withers to the outward eye only; like that strange moss which can lie on a dusty shelf half a century and yet, if placed in water, grows green again." She wept through the rest of the performance, through four numbers from The Ring, and finally Siegfried's funeral march. Her emotion seemed to expand as the music did, from the overture, through one piece after another, growing larger and larger until at last it was laid to rest. She sat silently as the people and the orchestra left the hall, and at last she sobbed, pleading with her nephew, "I don't want to go, Clark, I don't want to go!"

No doubt, Aunt Georgiana knew that to return to Nebraska was to leave, once more, her passion behind. Like the green moss, she would once more dry up, lying dusty on a shelf, as grey and forever as the plains that stretched interminably around her, where "from the beginning of the world, hope has lain down with hope and dream with dream and, renouncing, slept."

Cather's story is not one of hopelessness, regardless of the pain the reader might feel at Georgian's loss, not once but twice, of her dream. We realize as her nephew did that, no matter what the circumstance, passion lives on in the soul of mankind. One never knows when or how that spark may be rekindled into a flame, or from where will come the gentle rains that can turn the moss green again. But it is our human nature to believe it, and to embrace it when it comes, if only for a brief moment.



THE SECOND MANIFESTATION OF DEXTROAMPHETAKEGAL;  
SELF-PORTRAIT  
Craig McKenzie

**Heiress**  
*Second Place*  
by William Spencer

In my decorations  
Where the glimpses of shadows  
And angels creep,  
Where the pages crumble  
And dawn drags me out of bed  
Into a cold hard spray of good morning,  
I think of you.  
You and the comfort my heart  
Felt from your embrace.  
You and the curses that  
Lingered about on the asphalt.  
I want to thank you for  
Your red hair that I remember while  
Sitting outside the smoke.  
The smile that hid the diamonds falling,  
Cutting your cheeks like tears,  
Tears you could have showed me.  
"Hide me from this noisy, boring world", you may have said.  
I find one muse and see it's lost.  
I find one muse more and you're  
Too far away, too kept by the book prison.  
You are beautiful.  
You are pale and full of life and love.  
My eyes seared shut without vision.  
They've missed you.  
You are mine, in my mind.  
Do you mind?  
I'll be strong and say you're beautiful.  
Beautiful with me and my silly dream.



# A Conflict of Interest

## *Second Place*

by C. Brett Johnson

The grins in his eyes contradicted the frown that was so haphazardly glued to his face. This was a curious sight indeed, but neither the sarcasm nor the impatience he possessed could equal the disgust that was recklessly spinning around his stomach lining like a caged dog anticipating being freed.

He sat there motionless. His arms were on his writing desk, palms down, slouched back like a pug-faced teddy bear. English, Math, Science; they all passed by him as if he were deaf. The boy was neither impressed nor fascinated with these subjects or their roles in the great Laws of Association. His father ignored the problem, saying that his son was temporarily suffering from, "A lack for wonderment." His teachers labeled his constant downspiraling grades as an irreversible "Lack of motivation." But they were wrong, all of them, for the schoolboy was lacking nothing. He was in love with the ideas of wonderment and motivation; he himself was a grand spectacle of wonderment. If he had only known! If he was only told beforehand, in his mother's womb, in the nursery during his infancy, anytime before he entered school. It could have saved so much suffering for the boy -- he could have understood the voices that spoke to him at night. He could have comprehended the people and places that he knew but never met, the places he had never been, yet held communion on their fertile grounds.

The last hour bell rang. The eclectic, contradicting emotions he possessed all blended together into one splendid light between his ears. He could feel the warm radiance beat like blood in his ears, and this was what took him out of his afternoon meditation. He left among the shuffling of books and children's laughter without one ounce of jubilation or rejoice. That would not come until later that day. Instead, he stared at the coatrack and placed all of his disgust and spite on one of its hooks, like an article of clothing that would be re-adorned tomorrow morning when he would return to class.

When the boy came home, he found himself in the company of his nanny, for his mother and father were predictably out for the afternoon. However, his nanny greeted him with the warmth and love that the boy had come to accept. She offered him a plate of freshly baked butterscotch cookies and a glass of milk. He ate out of obligation and ritual rather than the need or hunger. Though the cookies were warm and moist, and the milk cold and crisp, there was a voice in his head telling him that this was nothing compared to the delicacies he had experienced in Germany, Italy, and Japan. The boy grabbed a second cookie and chewed as he watched the nanny staring at him fixedly. He stared back at the deep tight grooves that traced the corners of her smile. The voice then

asked the boy if he thought that her soul was as old as his. The thought scared the boy, but he hid his terror by returning a smile back to the nanny. Licking the excess milk off his lips, he hugged his nanny's waist the way he was expected to hug her, and moved his thick brown hair under the nanny's palm. Affection, to the Soul, was a science perfected decades ago, yet it still brought desirable feelings of satisfaction into his stable, unshakable being.

The boy then ran upstairs in the manner that all young boys are supposed to run and changed out of his school clothes. The blue cotton oxford and the navy corduroy pants lay on the floor like an old snake skin. The boy had become an entirely new being indeed. Dressed in a set of red silk pajamas, the boy jumped upon his monstrous bed mattress and frolicked beneath the newly pressed sheets. The pajamas were from Milan and made of the finest silken threads. The boy laughed and giggled as the silk slid against his flesh. Even the Old Soul reveled in the boy's joy. Though he could not yet gain the boy's use of physical sensation, he told the boy of the times he had spent in Milan and the joys of silk pajamas. The boy tried to ignore the whispering voice that lurked behind his brain, but like every other time, he had failed.

The boy sighed and ran his chubby fingers through his hair. The neatly groomed strands always fell back into place, gently brushing his spongy smooth forehead. A cool August breeze ran past him as he opened one of the large bay windows. The light from the sun adequately lit his bedroom. For a moment the boy stood there, soaking in the sun and the air, for times of serenity in this boy's life were few, and must be savored until they randomly occur again. Another voice came from within and his own voice told himself to keep quiet. The boy's glimpse of happiness ended as he transformed into the pouting cherub once again. It was an unfortunate situation -- the conflict that would be ultimately won by the Old Soul. It was still ongoing with the Spirit of New Youth. The battle had already caused quite a commotion for the boy. This was one reason why he remained silent in school; he was never quite sure what he would say even if he did have the interest to ever say anything. It was a power struggle the boy did not comprehend, and a situation the Old Soul himself had never actually understood. Such conflicts would arrive again soon when the boy would first be seriously introduced to religion and the questions of Heaven, God, and the Afterlife.

Both the boy and the Old Soul agreed to drop the matter and pursue further interests. The boy first peered out of the keyhole of his bedroom door for any sign of his nanny. Without a trace of anyone in sight, the boy then tiptoed to his chester drawers and pulled out a mammoth sketch pad from the bottom shelf. He then ran and leapt upon his bed again and pulled out a large box of crayons and pencils from a cigar box hidden beneath his bed. The Old Soul inhaled the aroma of dust, cardboard and rum-tipped cigar odor. With a mortal sense of immortality, the Soul grinned in anticipation to guide and dictate to the boy's imagination.

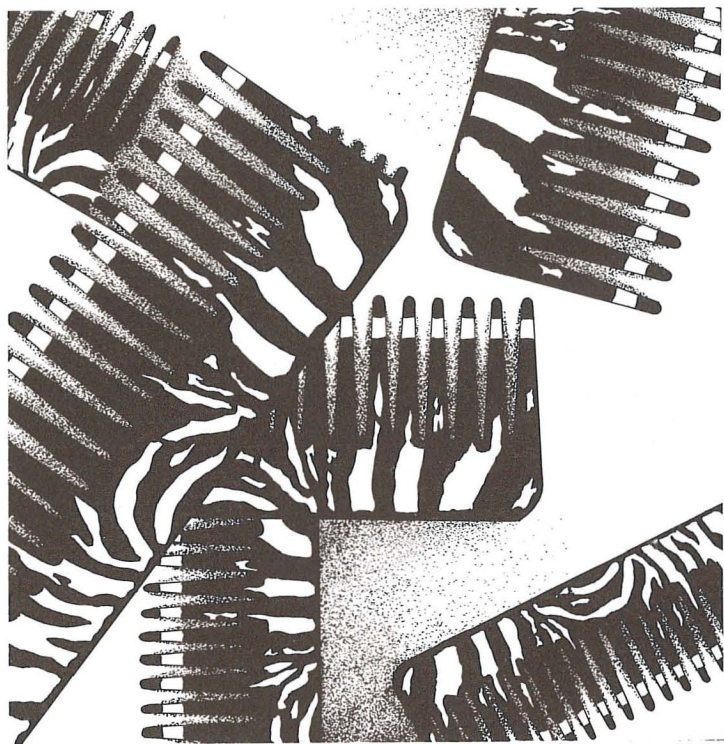
For the next two hours, the boy sat hunched over the drawing pad. Though his back would grow tired and he had to adjust his sitting styles many times during the duration, the boy stayed focused on his project, possessed. The boy scrapped dry pencil sketches and chalky pastels together on the undefined white masses until he was called down for dinner. The sun from his bay window had sunk below the horizon. The boy was perplexed as to what, or where, or even who he was drawing, but he knew it was beautiful. He understood that it was right because it was the only time in his life that he felt that his existence was validated. The warm glowing sensation in his head now rushed down into his heart. The spongy, boyish skin under his pajamas grew coarse with goose bumps. And the Old Soul, the Old Soul was content as well. The Old Soul's emotions had not yet merged with the boy's, so Old Soul was able to independently enjoy the beauty of the boy's art and the satisfaction of a job well done. Yet, ironically, the Soul possessed the urgency to become a whole, functioning being again. (This was marvelous! Though the feelings of the Soul had were of childhood infancy, they were nonetheless connected with the boy and his central nervous system. The Act of Synergy was now beginning to spark.) The Old Soul told the boy to put the pad and crayons away before anyone discovered their secret, for there would be many questions that could not be answered and the boy's parents would not allow such strange behavior in their house. For the first time, the boy did not try to block out the voice, and for the first time he did as the voice asked. The boy bounded down the stairs to dinner with joyous revelation. As he bound down the stairs, the boy thought, "Who is that person, the one behind my eyes?"

"I am you, I am the Sun, and I am All Things In-Between.", shouted the Old Soul. "And like the Sun, I shall shower you with radiance and confuse you by eclipsing the Logics of Mankind. Trust in me and your life...our lives shall glow eternally."

But for all of his raving, the Soul's great knowledge could not be translated into the language cloudy, childish perception; nor should it ever be that way.

At the dinner table that evening, the Old Soul gazed out into the open world through the wide, happy, blue eyes of the schoolboy. The boy needed the Soul, and the Soul needed the boy, and together their existence would be happier as a sum than as individual parts.





COMB ANYONE?  
(Third Place)  
Lisa Standen



## One Window

by Randa L. Colby

There is only one window in the room and it overlooks a frontier of trees. Oak trees are standing tall and majestically with branches dancing to the song whispered by summer winds. In the center of the forest a flower garden had been created, a flower garden which is kept lush by the loving fingers of local rosarians. Splendid roses in passionate reds, blushing pinks, and vivid corals spray the scene as if a frenzied painter had just splashed them on the earth. Massive wooden benches now gray with age are nestled in the shadows waiting to share this triumphant glory of nature. The visitor will smell the sweetness of the roses, the smell of the sun rays, and the muskiness of the rich earth. The visitor will hear the intimate whispers of the branches in the wind, the melody of happiness from the birds, and the excitement of the squirrels seated snugly in the solitude of the bench in the shadows. This garden of nature waits -- and waits -- and waits -- for the visitor.

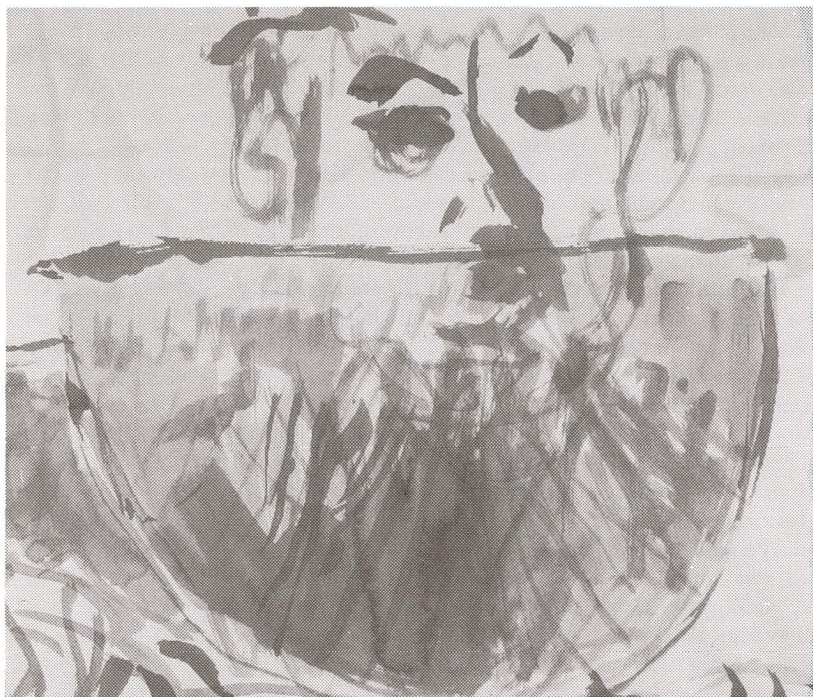
One lone window is his escape from the inside. The pungent odor in the room is a simmering pot of existence within these four walls. Stench snakes its way down the hallways from another resident's urine and feces mingled into the sterile smell of disinfectant and bleach from his bed linens. In the boiling simmering pot are the combined odors of medication, soap, shampoo, toothpaste, and deodorant. The spice of the simmering pot is the oppressive odor of hopelessness clinging to each resident. Death slowly stalks the halls. It touches all of them by taking small savoring bites. Finger by hand, arm by shoulder, ultimately death devours the victim.

One artificial poinsettia plant sits on the window ledge. Although the room is large enough to hold four beds, it is not big enough to hold two chairs for visitors. A beige wall of nylon mesh hangs loosely from the ceiling ready to construct a wall of privacy. To the left of his bed is a two foot square piece of cork, which displays the accomplishments of his fifty-four years of life. A birthday card with Donald Duck, a picture of a collie puppy, and a two year old calendar are neatly secured with staples to display his private collection. One of four beige lockers, similar to those in most high schools, protects the rest of his private possessions. To the right of his bed are two doorways. One leading to the community bath which he shares with the other residents of the ward, the other the door to the hallway, and the outside world.

Michigan weather that attacks the facility cannot reach Bill because he is safe behind his one window. When Bill is tucked safely in bed 314-4, nature's storms cannot harm him. The feel of blankets scoured in harsh detergent and bleach are a comfort to him. Metal bed rails are the loving arms that hold him in at night while during the day, plastic straps hug him into the wheelchair. An IV-pole is the statue that guards his bed while he sleeps.

A curtain now hides the only window in the room. The atmosphere is unique. It takes command of those living inside. Acting as a general, the atmosphere attacks all who enter the battlefield. It will unleash loneliness in every corner, and bombard with sadness each bedside. The attack strikes at each victim with pain and despair. The general marches through the hallways stealing hope, and stabbing with isolation. The ultimate victory is death, and supremely, it wins over every soldier.

There is only one window in his room. The volunteer no longer comes to take Bill to the wondrous garden outside his window. Bill Smith, resident in the local extended care facility, waits alone in his nylon privacy for the general.



BOWL & FACE  
Rachel Jernberg

# **The Alchemy of Suffering: A Review of F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams"**

*First Place*

by C. Brett Johnson

**"To the victor belongs the spoils."  
(From "The Beautiful and the Damned")**

"Winter Dreams" by Francis Scott Fitzgerald chronicles the life of Dexter Green and his attempts to fulfill his romantic quests of wealth, affection, and proverbial immortality. The story begins by presenting Dexter as a disillusioned adolescent and ends approximately sixteen years later by portraying Dexter as a wealthy businessman detached from his lifelong quest, longing for the romantic gloom of his youth. "He wanted to care, and he could not care. For he had gone away and he could never go back any more" (145). Dexter's dream was essentially a vision towards an ideal lifestyle that he believed could only be accommodated by wealth. He was not necessarily concerned with material possessions, but he craved a lifestyle of youth and mystery. Dexter believed that wealth could somehow preserve his dream, and financial status became his means to make his dream a reality. Judy Jones was his embodiment of this immortality, and combined with her looks and upper-class status, she imprisoned Dexter's attention and pushed his ambition to new heights. "No disillusion as to the world in which she had grown up could cure his illusion as to her desirability" (138). However, after years of helter-skelter promises and fulfillments, Dexter finally realized that his quest is for naught and the only evidence he had of his hard work was the empty happiness found in his material commodities. The years eventually eroded his sensitivity and left him dreaming to rescue his original "dreams" from the spiraling currents of success and self-pity.

The setting in "Winter Dreams" provides a sense of sadness and separation, while at the same time it eloquently incorporates Fitzgerald's trademark themes of youth, success, and money. Black Bear Lake, Minnesota fits this description perfectly. Although it is an upper-class recreational area, it is also a Middle West locale that seasonally hosts gentle summers as well as frigid temperatures and harsh winter conditions. "When he crossed the hills the wind blew cold as misery, and if the sun was out he tramped with his eyes squinted up against the hard dimensionless glare" (127). The setting also serves as a vehicle for symbolism. The summers symbolize the hope of Dexter's heart, but more importantly, the summer represents Judy's radiance and carefree attitude. It is imperative to note that Judy is never a part of the winter landscapes because



the winter symbolizes rugged individualism and hard work -- two things that Judy could never be part of. The weather also plays a key part in the last chapter in its description of Judy's decline from grace. "...the sun was sinking in dull lovely shades of pink and gold" (145).

Fitzgerald's point of view is often intertwined with his practice of writing from personal experience. "Dreams" has a narrator whose powers include describing the action and accelerating time. The reader is able to recognize Dexter's inner thoughts and many special details through the use of third person omniscience. This position gives Fitzgerald the ability to present Dexter's feelings to the reader in an attempt to create an intimate bond between the antagonist and the reader. However, Fitzgerald limits this omniscient writing style to better imprison the youthful mystique of Judy. Dexter and Judy both act illogically on occasion, and their actions complement Fitzgerald's omniscient writing style by allowing the reader to understand the "logic" of Dexter's strange ways, while complicating the reader's comprehension of Judy's disposition. For example, it is written that "Dexter was unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams" (130). However there is no explanation for Judy's actions other than that she is a peculiar breed of woman designed to be "...inexpressibly lovely and to bring no end of misery to a great number of men..." (128). Although it was also stated that Dexter's dreams were varying quality and sensibility, Judy did remain the underlying prize for his crusade. Fitzgerald presents Judy only on physical and emotional levels without any logical reasoning, so the reader may question the nature and honesty of her actions. Dexter is presented on physical, emotional, and logical planes so that he may be seen as genuine and honest. When the reader contrasts the personalities of Judy and Dexter, the limited point of view presents Dexter as the protagonist and Judy as somewhat of the antagonist because of the reader's forced inability to recognize Judy's motives or aspirations. Fitzgerald used this genre of point of view in order to present the male as the protagonist and the female as the antagonist. This is a reoccurring theme because much of his work is autobiographical, and this was his way of getting revenge against those who hurt him, as well as presenting himself in a more favorable light.

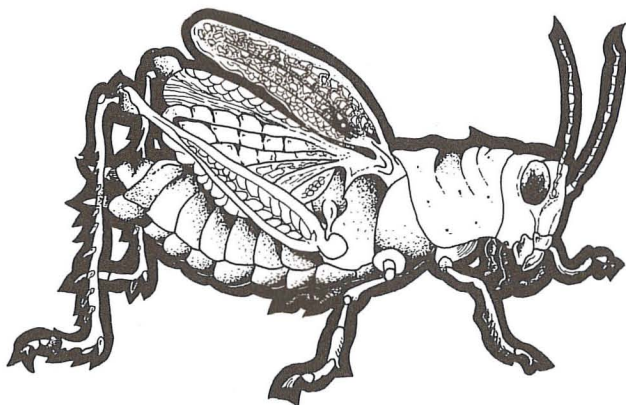
It is the turmoil in this story that makes Fitzgerald's form of suffering seem so golden. Honestly stated with a twist of melancholy, the conflicts are both internally and externally emotional. The first paragraphs of "Dreams" may portray Dexter as the well-adjusted son of a successful entrepreneur, but the following pages show his life in great turmoil. The largest, most troubling of these conflicts takes place within Dexter himself, though the elements of his conflict come from his external conflicts.

"...it occurred to him that he could not have Judy Jones. He had to beat this into his mind but he convinced himself at last. He lay awake at night for a while and argued it over. He told himself the trouble and pain she had caused him, he enumerated her glaring deficiencies as a wife. Then he said to himself that he loved her, after a while he went to sleep" (139).



Dexter's internal conflicts caused many external conflicts as well. Because of his inner struggling, he was not able to stay engaged to Irene Scheerer or maintain his happiness when he finally became engaged to Judy. Therefore, it was Dexter's inner conflict that made his situation so helpless. Ironically, it was Dexter's struggle with himself, not with Judy, that prevents his "dreams" from coming true.

Fitzgerald was once described as someone who "...married a lunatic and died young." To state his life so crudely does not do this man justice, but it does represent the pain he felt in reality and on the pages of his literature. After comparing the importance of point of view and conflict in "Winter Dreams," it is questionable as to who was Dexter's greater adversary -- Judy or himself? Though Fitzgerald never answers this question himself, this was another remarkable piece of work that provides even more insight on one of the most influential artists of our time. As an established writer, he spoke informally at a friend's party at four o'clock in the morning, "All gods dead, all wars fought, all faiths in man shaken." Though this statement may seem bleak and catastrophic, Fitzgerald always found a way to present the harsh realities of life in an eloquent, almost enviable fashion. Even the flighty flappers of the Jazz Age were able to take critical commentary on their lives and transform into it another facet of their lifestyle.



INSECT (grasshopper)  
Jason Hendrick

## What did you expect? by Gina Tucker

Step aside please,  
Step aside  
The hero hath arrive!  
Open your ears children  
Open your eyes  
Hats off, gentlemen  
Ladies, take a bow  
Presenting the one.... the only....  
the...ah...

crack addict who walked the streets?

## WHAT'S HIS NAME?

Three muddy pigs proceeded to beat him for no reason  
NONE AT ALL  
Probably because he's black  
OH! pardon me your honor

AFRICAN-AMERICAN

WHAT HAPPENED????  
he wa just walkin mindin hi own bidnes den aw de sudden!

## WHAT'S HIS NAME?

he dead  
YEAH we aw knew im  
i knows im real good he be our brother

## WHAT'S HIS NAME?

It time we stand up fo us  
ain't no honky pig gonna treat us de way dey done my great  
granddaddy

Bring him flowers  
Praise the shrine

Shed a tear

for the man who.. who  
What did he do?

I'm not sure  
maybe he was a good man  
    help the kids  
    peaceful-selfless  
Drop his own to give me a hand?  
Probably would have died at my own hands had the honkies left  
him alone?

THAT IS NOT THE QUESTION!  
WHAT IS THE QUESTION?  
WHAT IS HIS NAME?

His mama real sad  
sos his X  
dey all care cos dere boy been kilt

(and there's a nice pot of gold at the end of the judicial  
rainbow!!)  
Too bad dis here T.V. black and white  
cos all I see o dat rainbow be black and white  
Well, maybe a hint of green

The shrine represents the loss we sustained  
    The pain felt by the family that abandoned him  
    And the family that he abandoned  
The mural the flowers the icons

Our Mirror Image  
Our Progeny

- I. The Product Of
  - a. our parents
  - b. our schools
  - c. our role models
  - d. our peers
  - e. the media

WHAT IS HIS NAME?

he proudly bears his father's name  
    YEAH  
    It's something like  
    MALICE

## Spare Tire Children

by Roy Seeger

Spare tire swings  
smudged children playing in the dirt  
clouded gray whites hanging on ropes  
from broken tree landscapes

Spare tire planters  
sprouting rusted weeds  
black blankets billowing  
from a rubber field

petrol-soaked hands  
throwing scraps to a sewage-drenched dog  
children rush to scrape their hands clean  
living their spare tire lives



MY MESS  
Deb Flanigan



# Home Grown Cybernetic

## *Second Place*

by Sherry Jones

"Eeeooh," said the stranger, peering into the neonatal unit window, "look at that one; it looks like it's gonna die."

My sister Nonie took only a millisecond to leap from my bedside and point out a few well chosen facts of life to that insensitive observer. My baby had been born two months prematurely, and suffered from Hyaline Membrane Disease (underdeveloped lungs). The unknown woman, and her companions, viewed him as something of an oddity to be stared at from a comfortable, emotionally removed distance. Their reaction to him reminded me of when one tastes something bitter, and attempts to shake off the unpleasantness with shrugged shoulders and a waving of the hands, or as when one mimics the urge to vomit after slowing down to gawk at a nasty auto accident. Nonie's diatribe, though less than the epitome of eloquence, was understood; this baby was her nephew, not a freak show exhibit -- and I, Nonnie's little sister and the baby's mom, sat less than twenty feet away. The woman and her entourage left rather abruptly.

The baby was perfectly formed, and weighed less than four pounds. Betraying his prematurity, silky, black hair lay neatly on his head and skin like a delicate downy cloak. Ten tiny fingers curled into fists that stretched about his 17 1/2" length, reaching far beyond prognosis, announcing to the world that he was prepared to defy any and all imposed limitations and preconceptions. In my heart, he was the standard by which all others were to be measured. The full-term babies, bundled snugly in blankets that barely contained their mass, looked like pale pink piggies in clear plastic pens. These newborns, almost bursting with fat layered in distorted folds of human flesh, were smiled at and waved to by family and friends, as though pride should be taken in their excess. I saw them as neither healthy nor beautiful.

The hospital staff had tactfully inquired about my son's name, citing certain formalities surrounding the necessary paperwork. I named him Christopher, after the St. Christopher of my religious teachings, who had reportedly carried Christ over troubled waters. I prayed this child would also be delivered, gently and safely, over the raging rivers that threatened to engulf him. His every breath was taken with difficulty, in spite of the high oxygen flow, and each hour of his life was celebrated. A glass case enclosed his face (to prevent thumb sucking), and IV's provided nourishment and fluids; the effort of suckling would have used precious energy, exhausting him, and thwarting any hope of survival. Nurses and doctors constantly reassessed his situation, and tiny glass tubes poked his little heels hourly to gather blood samples. Fluid infusion was closely monitored; starting an intravenous line in those almost microscopic head veins was difficult

at best, and accomplished through equal parts of prayer and skill. His new mother precisely calculated warmth, cradling him in her womb of stainless steel and glass, maintaining viability through the umbilical cord which controlled his artificially continued gestation. My familiar heartbeat was replaced with the regular rhythm of her computerized life support systems. Human touch was accomplished only through black rubber gloves set in the sides of this incubator/mother, but they were the hands of doctors and nurses, not mine.

Nonie wasn't able to declare definitively that Christopher wouldn't die, though a glimpse into the future would have proved reassuring; this very special child would touch hearts and minds in phenomenally unique ways throughout his lifetime. Meanwhile, I spent countless hours at that same window of the neonatal unit, watching my little peanut, trying to imprint his image on my heart, fearing that I might forget the smallest detail, that I would someday be unable to remember his little face scrunching into a yawn. Putting my hand to the glass walls that separated us, I imagined touching his soft skin and letting him know I was there, that I loved him and would gladly have given my life in exchange for his, and that he had not been abandoned. I supposed what he must smell like, tried to mentally hold him in my arms, longed to put him back where he came from, under my heart, and carry him for just a little while longer.



HOMES  
Craig McKenzie

## Double Dump Brownies

by Wesley M. Schieman

Patience is a virtue most needed with children. When kids attempt a project and fail, parental responses need to be tempered with compassion. Allowing them to succeed or making amends when they don't succeed instills confidence and responsibility. My father's composure during a childhood baking venture illustrates such patience.

When I was eight and my sister Linda was seven, we wanted to cheer up our mother who was sleeping in bed with the flu. We decided a batch of walnut covered brownies would be perfect. Unfortunately, we were both too young to grasp the concept of the "recipe." Our mother knew her recipe by heart and never referred to a cook book when she made brownies. Linda and I had watched a few times as she added a little of this, a lot of that, baked the mixture and took finished brownies out of the oven. Baking appeared simple and unstructured.

My sister and I started by finding all the ingredients. We were fairly sure of what they all were and placed them on the clean counter in straight rows. Fate gave us a hint of calamities to come when Linda dropped a full gallon of milk on the floor. The gold tile was instantly transformed into a shallow white lake. Fear of waking our mom paralyzed us for several long seconds; however, only the cat came in to lap at the spreading spill. Not finding a mop, I used a large window squeegee to push most of the milk out the back door onto the cement steps.

The balance of the ingredients was procured without incident. Cocoa, sugar and the last gallon of milk were lined up on the crowded counter with previously found supplies. We started by mixing random amounts in a large bowl. I put six eggs in the blender, but Linda pressed a button marked "frappe" before I found the lid. In seconds, one wall and the cat were peppered with light yellow globules. A small brown bottle of vanilla was spilled in the rush to unplug the mixer. The remaining eggs in the mixer were poured into our large bowl.

After stirring the solution for several minutes, we poured it into a metal cake pan, spilling only a little. The pan was now filled with fluid resembling watered-down chocolate milk. Before putting the full pan in the oven, we emptied a small bag of walnut chips over the brownies. They promptly sank to the bottom.

Twenty-five minutes later we were sure they must be done. Undaunted by preceding mishaps, I excitedly retrieved the dish out of the un-preheated, 200 degree oven. The adult-sized oven mitts made my hands look like lobster claws. We had made a pan of barely-steaming runny brown fluid. "I don't think



we did it right," Linda understated. Our enthusiasm more intact than the kitchen, we decided to start over. I dumped the warm pan's contents out the back door next to the milk-covered steps.

We used the same procedures for the second batch, including the disregard for tidiness. The aroma of the splashed vanilla filled the air. The kitchen looked like a scene from "The Little Rascals meet Calvin and Hobbes." Our brief "flour fight" dusted previous spillages and each other. The second batch was made so thick we needed an ice cream scoop to get it from the mixing bowl to the metal cake pan. This time, though, the walnuts stayed on top. Our dad would be home in less than an hour, so we cranked the oven to 475 degrees, put the pan in and went to the living room to watch T.V.

The smoke appeared halfway through Bugs Bunny cartoons. I quickly ran into the kitchen, put on the "lobster claws," opened the oven and placed the smoking pan on a cooling rack. Our mother's intended surprise was now a large charcoal briquette that was hard enough to cut glass. I dumped the still-smoldering black mass out the back door. The kitchen now resembled downtown Tokyo after a Godzilla attack in a monster movie, and we still had no brownies. Dad would be home any minute. Anxiety grew into panic.

A car door slam announced our father's arrival. He walked toward the back of the house, past the brown gooey liquid topped with the black brick, up the milk covered steps to find two kids, near tears, in a violated kitchen. He just stood there, expressionless. Then Dad slowly walked in a few paces, leaving footprints in the ubiquitous flour. Before he said anything, Linda and I explained how we just wanted to cheer up mom with some brownies. We told him how hard we'd tried and how long we'd labored. We described dumping the first batch and then having to dump the second batch. After apologizing for the sixteenth time, we just stood there, waiting to be grounded until middle age.

Instead of "going ballistic" though, our dad chuckled sympathetically. My sister and I were instructed to thoroughly clean the food-splattered room, though Dad said he'd help a little. Dad emphasized that it is important to make attempts on your own, but it's often necessary to get adult help with a big project, especially if big problems occur. I started to hose off the back steps while Linda started wiping counters. After thirty minutes of sweeping, scrubbing, and scraping, the kitchen was no longer eligible for disaster aid.

When the kitchen was mostly cleared, Dad went into the pantry and found a box of instant brownies. With paternal assistance being the main ingredient, this batch was quite palatable. Thanks to our father's patience and understanding, Linda and I learned an important lesson that day: that it's all right to make mistakes as long as you accept responsibility for them. Try new things but be prepared to clean up after them. Instead of just getting angry, our dad used this as an opportunity to teach.

We were able to surprise our waking mom with brownies after all. After a couple of bites, she realized they were not home made but from a box. When Mom asked what kind they were, Linda and I just smiled and said "Double Dump Brownies."



# The People Under the Stairs

by Roy Seeger

The people under the stairs say that it's easy to see them if you know how to look, but no matter how hard I try I just can't seem to find them. They say that I could if I really wanted to, but I just can't. I sure can hear them though. It's usually late at night when they tell me stories of their world and their magics. They say I can't see them because I don't believe, but I do believe, I do. I say that I can hear them fine so that must mean that I believe enough, but the people under the stairs say it's not.

Sometimes all I can hear is a bunch of voices whispering, kinda like a church choir or somethin', but other times I can hear different voices. Sometimes they start screaming so loud that I have to tell them to be quiet or someone will hear, but they tell me not to worry.

"Most people can't hear us at all," they say. I'm sure there're others that can but I don't know any. I don't even know anybody else who believes in magic except my little sister Jojo and even she don't believe in the people under the stairs. I guess she had her own world and her own friends. She's pretty trippy for a seven year old. One time last week she was limping down the hall dragging her foot. I asked her what was wrong and she told me that Crowley accidentally turned her foot to gold. "But don't worry," she said. "It's only temporary."

Crowley's one of the people she sees. He's her friend from the other side. "He's got long thin arms, kinda like a rubberband" she told me once, "and his lower lip sticks out like a monkey's, and his pot belly's so big that he can't even see his feet." I asked her what his voice sounds like but she said "I don't know. I guess he kinda sounds like the wind."

She said that she even went to his world sometimes. "It's beautiful!" she'd say. "All the trees have autumn leaves but they never fall off and the sky is the most wonderful shade of deep red. And the most unusual creatures, they crawl up your hand, perch on your shoulder and sing in your ear."

I looked at her with greedy eyes and told her about the people under the stairs, and how they'd say almost the same things about magic, almost. I told her how sometimes they whispered me to sleep with their stories but she just said that I'm dreaming. "I think I should know when I'm dreamin'" I said. Then she asked me if I ever saw them, and I had to say "no." Then she said that don't count anyways. She told me that there's no real magic in voices and that until I see them I just don't believe enough. That sounds an awful lot like what the people under the stairs tell me.

The people under the stairs told me once why it is that most people don't believe in them. They're out of phase a little, kinda like ghosts, but they're not dead. We could still see them if we tried, but that would mean believing in

magic, and most people just ain't willing to do that. Jo just never had a chance not to believe. You see, after she was born mom and dad took to traveling all over the world, going to Europe to visit their dying families. They never did spend much time with her.

When they were gone our older brothers Josh and Jacob took care of us, in other words, we'd take care of each other. My brother Josh was twenty-two and oh so mature. He thought he was cool and all the women loved him. He never could accept that he had a fat ass, I know because he always used to sit on me when I was little. Now we hardly ever see him, and when we do he's either plastered or hung over. Whenever he comes home from the bars it's best not to go near him, he's a mean drunk. I don't think he really means to hurt us, but he's awful big. Just last week he threw Jo into the wall, hard. I saw the bruises. I don't think he meant to bruise her, he just wanted her out of his way.

My brother Jacob's only nineteen and can't get in the bars, so he's just a dope fiend. The thing is, he thinks he's so clever at hiding it, but it's obvious to everyone, except mom and dad. They were never home enough to even care. He'd walk in at all hours his eyes glowing red, smelling of strange smoke. Then he'd go straight for the kitchen and eat some of the weirdest things; like peanut butter and bananas or sometimes he'd eat tuna right from the can. C'mon Jake we're not that stupid!

Still he was pretty cool, he talks to us and even plays games sometimes. Once I told him about the people under the stairs and Jo's friend Crowley. He started laughing. "Why?" I asked "do you see magic too?"

"Hell! Our whole families always seein' shit, one way or another." He's alright 'cept when he gets too burnt out, then he gets mean. He doesn't get violent like Josh, just sarcastic as hell. Then you just gotta stay away from him, that's all.

Me and Jo learned how to stay away real quick, if it wasn't our brothers it was our parents. They taught us when we were real young. They were great role-models. So most of the time we'd both sit on Jojo's bed and talk. Once she told me how her room is a focus for magic. She said there are seven magical pathways through her room. "It's strange, I just start walking while I concentrate and things change. I know there are seven of them but I've only walked four, the other three seem so ... so dark, you know? Maybe that's where the people under the stairs are? Maybe that's why you can't see them, it's too dark?"

I told her to teach me how to walk the pathways so I can find out, but she says that she can't. "All I do is believe and I'm there, I guess you just don't believe enough." I wish people would quit telling me what I believe.

We used to talk like that all day, except on the weekends when we'd sneak over the city pool. It wasn't hard, it's not like there was anyone to tell us it was dangerous. Jo loved to swim, she was so graceful. She'd cut through the water like a fish, but her real gift was in diving. For a seven year old she was pretty damn good. She says that her goal is to do the perfect dive. "I want to do a dive without a splash, I want it to be so perfect that the water doesn't even

ripple." I told her it was impossible, as long as a person has a body there is going to be some splash, and even the Olympic divers splash a little. I told her that only ghosts and things didn't make a splash and that she'd have to get rid of her body first, and that's impossible. Her pale eyes stared into mine, "I believe in magic, don't you?" I didn't say a thing, her eyes were just so distant.

I think Jo's spending more time in Crowley's world then here with us. The other day I saw her walking down the hall with her hand stuck out in front of her. She just walked by me staring at her hand. She would have kept on going if I hadn't grabbed her by the shoulder and shook her. She looked up into my face then back at her hand. "Isn't it pretty?" I looked at her stupid. "My hand, I turned it into a butterfly. Do you like it?"

I told her she was crazy and that I didn't see no butterfly. She said that I couldn't see it cause I didn't want to, so I said "Teach me to see it Jo, please. I want to see the butterfly so much, just teach me." She said she wanted to but that she wasn't sure that it would be a good idea just yet, but maybe soon, maybe.

That's what the people under the stairs say too. They always say "soon" and then they leave me waiting some more. I know I should be grateful that I hear their voices at all but I can't help wanting to see them. They say that bodies and faces aren't important here and that sight is the least of the senses under the stairs. "You don't see faces under the stairs, you just feel them."

Still, I like to imagine what they look like. That's all I can do. I ask them to at least tell me what they feel like but they just say that I'll find out soon. I want to find out now!

They say that they can show me magic and teach me spells "when I take that last step." I ask them to tell me "what step?" but they don't say anything else, they never do.

I just got a letter from Hamburg. It's from my parents. They say that they miss us very much, and that they want to come home to visit, and that they should be home by the twelfth. That's two days.

I know they'll bitch about how messy the house is no matter what, but I still gotta try and clean all the dirty dishes and maybe sweep a little. I know everyone else is too far gone to care but I guess I still do a little, and even though they're all in their own worlds I'm still in this one. And the people under the stairs say I have to stay in it for a while longer, but that's not up to me, it's up to them. I don't want to stay. That's THEIR game not mine. So now I have to do the damn dishes even though I don't care.

I tried telling Jo about our parents coming home, but she's getting way worse. She's so lost in her new world that sometimes I think she doesn't even care about this one anymore. Last night I went to her room after dark to talk to her. I was gonna tell her how important it was that she didn't do anything weird when mom and dad were home. I was gonna tell her how they'd only be here for a week or two, maybe a month tops and then they'd leave again. I was gonna tell her, that is, until I heard her moving around in her room. I peeked through



the cracked door. She was movin' around, jumping and swinging, doin' some kinda dance with someone, except she was by herself. Strange thing though, I saw her change right in front of me. Her gentle brown hair became messed and wild, and her eyes glowed like a cat's. Then just outta nowhere, I saw my little sister floating in the air, but she wasn't really floating, more like she was being thrown by somebody.

"Higher Crowley, higher!" she screamed. She flew again, almost hitting the ceiling and when she landed they started spinning around like a broken clock, twirling insanely until the springs finally snapped, and she toppled to the bed smiling. She fell asleep right away. She looked like an angel with her hair a halo around her head, peaceful as a baby and not at all like the crazy dancer that she was.

I ran back to my room and slammed the door. The people under the stairs began singing in chorus, so I told them about my sister and what I saw. They told me that they thought that I was almost ready to see them because after seeing something that trippy I couldn't help but believe. They said that they would be ready to show me tomorrow, but I said "maybe that's not such a good idea because that's when my parents come home." They told me that it didn't matter and that my parents wouldn't know a thing. I was so excited that I couldn't sleep so I let them whisper stories of what they'd show me tomorrow.

The next morning I woke to the voices of mom and dad arguing in the kitchen downstairs. At first I thought they were the people under the stairs, but then I remembered that it was morning and I wouldn't see them until tonight. So I walked down to the kitchen to see my 'loving' parents. They looked the same, except maybe a little older. They saw me and ran over for a hug. They were always like that the first day, all excited about their stories and the little gifts they'd brought us, but after that wore off they'd start pacing the floors until they found another reason to leave again. It never took long.

They asked where Jojo was and I told them "I guess she's still sleeping," so I went up to get her. Strange thing, she was lying on her bed asleep but I could see through her, like she was some kinda ghost. I shook her awake and her eyes fluttered open, but she just laid there. I told her that mom and dad were downstairs and that they wanted to see her. She still didn't do nothin', and the smile from last night was still there.

So the only thing I could do was drag her up and try to snap her out of it. I walked her down the stairs telling her how the people under the stairs said that I'd see them soon, she began mumbling a little but she was still distant.

When she entered the kitchen it was an instant replay of my reception a few minutes ago. They didn't even notice when Jojo didn't hug them back or thank them for her gift, but then again they always were slow about these sort of things.



Still, I didn't want to give them a chance to figure it out. Right after mom and dad finished hugging her I told them how we always go to the pool on Saturdays and how if we didn't show up for our lesson the people there would worry. They just let us go. I don't think they knew how to do anything else.

Jo snapped out of it after we got outside. We began talking and stuff, but I could still see through her a bit. I asked her if she knew why, and she said that it's because I finally believe in the magic, and that everyone that believes in things like the people under the stairs or Crowley sees everything like this. "Sometimes," she says "sometimes it gets so far and the people get so transparent that they don't see anything in this world anymore. You didn't really think that it was only one way, did you? Truth is most people on the other side don't believe in us either."

I asked her how faded I looked to her. "When I woke up in the morning I couldn't see you at all, but now...now I can see you a little. It's kinda like seein' something through a fog. But I can still see you pretty good up close."

I told her I was scared of not seeing anybody anymore but she told me not to worry, "Everything is beautiful, it's a new world, there is no pollution, and the people are kind and they never learned how to hate. There was never anyone there to teach them."

"But what about this world Jo?" She didn't her me, I think she was too caught up in her beautiful vision. I didn't have to ask her again, her smile was answer enough.

By the time we got to the pool she was in a daze again, it was kinda like she hypnotized herself with her story. The pool was almost deserted, then again, it was pretty early. There were only a few mothers with their children in the shallow end. Me and Jo, we haven't played in the shallow end for a long time.

Anyway I was in the middle of the pool splashin' and carryin' on and Jo was just walking around the deck, hanging around the diving board waiting for the lifeguard to open it, and he wouldn't open it for ten minutes.

I dove underwater to see if I could reach the bottom when I came up I saw Jo talking to someone, I could see the faint outline of a little gnome. "That must be Crowley." I called to get Jo's attention but she didn't notice, she just kept on talking. I even splashed her to get her attention but she just kept on talkin' as if she were dry. She didn't even squeal or yell at me like she usually does. She just kept on talking to herself.

After the lifeguard unlatched the chain Jo broke away from the shadow and walked out to the end of the board. I screamed her name again and splashed her but she didn't pay attention.

She hopped on the board a little to get the feel of it and then she jumped and sprung off it, gliding like a swan. She arced perfectly, cutting through the water as if it were air. There was no splash, not even a ripple, it was the perfect dive.



DO NOT SCORN THE UNICORN HORN  
(First Place)  
Kevin Erickson

## *Star Trek:* Reflecting Society's Love of Great Literature by Lynne Mandeville

Zapping people with laser guns and beaming from ship to ship are accepted in the world of science fiction due to the tremendous influence of the *Star Trek* shows. Fifty three percent of all Americans consider themselves *Star Trek* fans. *Star Trek's* following is wide and varied. The producers and writers of the show draw in the public by their constant interest in the issues of the times along with exciting adventures. Is it any wonder than that *Star Trek* has gained worldwide acclaim along with Emmy Award-winning nominations? *Star Trek*, however, is more than a space cowboy's adventure. It deals in social injustice, civil rights, terrorism and many other important issues. With these issues and great literature *Star Trek* has kept our interest for over two decades. Good literature is advocated, it is brought out and encouraged with social issues of the times, in both the old and new series, as well as in the movies.

In 1965, we were in the middle of a rebellious time period for our young people. Rights of youth took on a new perspective; new ways of teaching were introduced. The idea was to capture the attention of the student, make him want to learn instead of forcing learning into him. *Star Trek* was introduced to the television screen at that time period. Two great Shakespearian actors were sequestered as the leading men. William Shatner played James Kirk, captain of the Enterprise, and his sidekick was Leonard Nimoy as Spock. Trying to capture the television audience of that time, which included many impressionable youth, they made many references to Shakespeare's work along with gallant rescues and daring deeds. However these references were minor in comparison to those made to Greek Mythology. An entire show was based on Adonis, the greek god, and "Who Mourns Adonis" was one of the most sought after reruns after the television show was cancelled in 1969.

It took ten more years before *Star Trek* was again able to influence the American public's mind on great literature. Many things had changed. The youth of 1980 were a quieter group wearing classic sweaters and jeans and holding more conventional views. They responded well to the silver screen edition of the *Star Trek* shows. *Star Trek* again took the youth's position seriously with issues of quieter concern and newly made, more conservative uniforms. With great insight they drew the youth to the theaters. Shakespearian scholar, Nick Meyer, was asked to direct and write several of the movies. Born in 1945 Meyers had been writing and directing long before he was asked to do the *Star Trek* movies. Meyer wrote and directed *Time After Time* but was most famous for his Sherlock Holmes novel *The Seven Percent Solution*. Putting



his considerable talent to use Meyers was able to bring out many great works of literature and still entertain the public with contemporary moral issues and run-ins with exotic and unusual aliens.

Meyers first venture into *Star Trek* waters was with the movie *Star Trek Two*. During the movie we saw an old foe return to torment Kirk. Kahn, played by famous actor Ricardo Montalban, wanted vengeance for a wrong done to him by Kirk. Using a parallel of *The Tale of Two Cities*, we get to see good versus evil, man versus man, and science versus the government. In *The Tale of Two Cities* we see a man seeking vengeance on another and a man protecting his kinsmen. In *Star Trek Two* we see Kirk versus Kahn and Kirk protecting his kinswoman. In *The Tale of Two Cities* Dr. Manette regains a daughter he had lost years before, and in *Star Trek Two* Kirk regains a son he had lost. Both of the aforementioned children were lost due to the parents' job situation at the time. Manette was a gentile during a revolutionary period and gave up his daughter so she could live safely while he went to prison under an assumed name. Kirk's job was flying in space and he gave up his son due to the dangers he faced so that his son could also have a safe and normal life. A direct quote was read in the beginning of the movie: "It was the best of times. It was the worst of times." At the end of the show we see that it was indeed the best and worst of times. Kirk gained a son he thought he had lost and lost a friend he thought he'd have forever. *The Tale of Two Cities* quote indeed held true.

Moving on to *Star Trek Four*, written by Nick Meyer, we hear of two famous books. *Mutiny On the Bounty* is mentioned in the first section of the show and *Whale Weep Not* in the middle. Both of these stories were apparently written into the show. The crew of the Enterprise were arriving home in a stolen vessel they had commandeered from their enemies, similar to *Mutiny On the Bounty*. A reference to "the mutineers of five hundred years ago" told us Kirk and his crew felt as if they were in similar circumstances. Then the writers of the show added the *Whale Weep Not*, a book that talks about the intelligence and the extinction of whales. The crew used their stolen vessel to rescue two whales which had been extinct due to the negligence of the people of our time period. The two whales were communicated with, by Spock, thus proving that whales are, indeed, intelligent {This issue is a large concern to our youth of today. They are even taught about it at school}. The crew of the Enterprise beamed the two humpback whales onto the ship and saved them from extinction. *Whale Weep Not* if they are not extinct.

"All I want is a tall ship and a star to sail her by." quoted by James Kirk in *Star Trek Five* was from the book *Sea Fever*. The main characters of the show are standing at the wheel of an old ship on a new elegant Enterprise as these aforementioned words are uttered. The contrast between the rough wooden wheel and the plush modern furnishings makes a perfect foil for the complexity of the crew's feelings. They are growing old and all they've ever had is the fever of traveling. It was their dream and their nightmare. As they later approach the "great barrier", they begin to wonder if their lives are worth a sea



of stars. A reference to Christopher Columbus shows us how the dream of traveling in a ship has evolved over the centuries. Sea fever then and now, reigns in the hearts of men.

After the movies came the show, *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. In keeping with *Star Trek* tradition, the next generation looked their audience over carefully. The youth of today, more aware now of the social consequences of their actions, question their own motivation and the causes of their deeds. *Star Trek* reflected this with a stricter interpretation of the prime directive and many more shows based on social issues. Good literature was still advocated in the show's scripts, along with the social issues they were addressing. The captain was again a Shakespearian actor, Patrick Stewart. Playing the part of John Luc Picard, Stewart led the literature pathway with references to Shakespeare's *Henry V* during a show called "The Defector." The counterpart of Spock in the next generation consists of two people, Johnathan Frakes and Brent Spinner. Frakes, a graduate from Harvard, has many credits under his belt including *North and South*, *Paper Dolls*, and *Falcon Crest*. Frakes plays the part of Will Riker, second in command or 'Number One'. Riker's job, like Spock's, is to protect the captain and command the ship when need be. Although Riker is a strong and dominant character, we see a softer side of him occasionally in his love of reading. His mother taught him to read when he was seven. Riker had broken his leg and was bored. Reading was an ancient past time and she felt it would ease the boredom. We see the evidence of this in the man as books lie on his dresser and quite often in his hands. Brent Spinner, the other half of Spock, is a man with no feelings. Playing the part of an android called Data, he shows his fascination with mystery, Holmes was added to the good books list with an entire show based on his famous character Moriarty. "The Big Goodbye" features both Stewart and Spinner in tales from the famous Dixon Hill series *Robin Hood*, *Cyrano De Bergerac*, and *Hamlet* all get their turn at presiding in the halls of *Star Trek* literature as well.

Many actors and actresses who advocate reading on television commercials or in posters have been guests on the *Star Trek* shows. Christopher Plummer and Elizabeth Taylor are both 'read to your kids' commercial people. Elizabeth Taylor acted in the first series, and Christopher Plummer in the movies. The next generation featured Whoopi Goldberg as an honored guest. A poster of Whoopi reading hangs in many libraries all over the country.

Life after death is an important issue; so are drugs and racism. *Star Trek* deals with these issues head-on and in a way that appeals to the youth of our times. *Star Trek's* popularity, won by the lasers and exciting special effects, is enhanced by the talented actors and directors it uses. However, through it all, we see actors and actresses, directors and writers, who take great pride in literature encouraging our youngsters to read in some very subtle ways. What better legacy to leave our next generation than to give them the wonderful works of the past.



CLOSE-IT  
David Wesch

## Mommy's Little Angel

by Linda Molesworth

"Paybacks are hell." I laughed at my mother when she said this, one of her favorite worn out cliches, over and over during my teenage years. It had been a particularly trying week for her, culminating in a little episode in which I had neglected to put oil in the family car, causing irreparable engine damage. I had been the typical teenage girl -- inconsiderate, short-sighted, and not thinking of the consequences of my actions. Now, years later, as I have grown and matured into a responsible adult, those three words that my mother had etched into my memory have indeed come back to haunt me. My paybacks have come to me in the form of my own teenage daughter, Kelly, who is doing her best to drive me over the brink of sanity.

I knew I was in trouble a few years ago when I took my then-sweet, pre-teen daughter to the doctor after finding a suspicious looking lump on her breast. Two hours and fifty dollars later, the doctor smilingly reassured me that this was not the cancer I had feared, but that Kelly was now developing breasts and budding into a perfectly normal teenager. That was the beginning of the end -- of my daughter's sweetness, of my overprotective parental concern, and of any hope of my daughter ever allowing me to be near her in any state of undress.

Because of this incident with the doctor, Kelly has developed a maddening obsession with modesty. This only seems to present a problem, however, when it comes time for her nightly bath. Every time she gets ready to get out of the bathtub, I hear her scream, "Mom, will you bring me a towel?" It is beyond me how someone could forget this basic necessity every time she bathes, yet each night we go through the ritual of me feeling my way over to the bathtub (not being allowed to open my eyes for fear I might see her breasts and haul her back to the doctor). On one particular occasion, I tripped over the telephone that she had placed next to the bathtub in case her boyfriend should happen to call. Inevitably I fell to the floor, hitting my head on the toilet on the way down. As I was lying, dazed, in a pool of liquid I fervently prayed was not my own blood, I heard Kelly proclaim, "You better not be looking, mom!" I assured her that all I could see were stars.

This brings us to another of her nerve-wrecking obsessions -- the telephone. As is true with any teenager, Kelly cannot be far from a telephone, but she has carried this typical preoccupation to its outermost limits. We had only an inkling of how bad her telephone fixation actually was until receiving a monthly bill last summer. Her fifth-best friend had moved to Port Huron, and her daily long distance chats with him totalled \$320.00. We grounded her from the telephone usage for the next two months, but since no one was home to supervise during her summer vacation, we thought it best to install call-waiting service to at least insure that we would receive our business calls. Recently, though, several



months after her punishment, I overheard her asking one of my husband's most important clients if he was sure that his call was important since she was on the other line with her boyfriend.

I am certain one of the reasons that Kelly enjoys the telephone so much is that it requires very little effort to use -- she is the epitome of laziness. One of her favorite ploys to avoid housework is the old sit-on-the-couch-with-the-unopened-nail-polish-trick. She waits until it is time for housework, then unscrews the nail polish top and disdainfully exclaims, "I can't, I have to paint my nails and it takes forever for them to dry!" Not only that, but unloading the dishwasher, I have discovered, is completely out of the question. When we installed the dishwasher, I patiently explained to Kelly that unloading it was to be one of her regular chores. She, in turn, patiently explained that this was something I should not expect her to do since the heat from the dishwasher would make her hair limp (how inconsiderate of me).

Another occurrence that drives me crazy is the inevitable break-up of the boyfriend of the month. I listen as she sobs uncontrollably in my arms, wailing about the loss of this, her one and only true love, and I try to reassure her that someone better will come along. This warrants me a withering gaze and a contemptful, "But mom, you just don't understand!" Trying to offer some words of wisdom, I once expounded on the power of women in today's society, and how no one should feel as if she needed a boyfriend to achieve her own self worth, to which she replied, "But mom, I did that one day and I hated it!" As I attempt to ease her through these hysterics, I am comforted with the knowledge that at least her room will be clean the next day. This is the one time that my daughter cleans her room, tearing through it and dispensing of any and all of the memorabilia that she has acquired with this particular "true love."

Question any teenager as to the level of his or her mother's intelligence and he or she will probably say that most of the time, mom is pretty stupid. Now, having lived through much of what my mother had experienced, I often call her to vent some of my frustrations, and once in a while, even to ask for some advice. I have to give mom some credit here. Instead of tossing me her favorite lines that I probably deserve to hear from her, like, "I told you so," and "You're only reaping what you've sown," she actually gives me reassurance and hope for the future. "Don't worry dear," she knowingly says. "Good things come to those who wait."





FIGURE STUDY  
Michael LeFevre



WELCOME TO HANAMAKI  
(Second Place)  
Craig McKenzie

# Emerson: The Courage of His Convictions

## *Second Place*

by Susan DeMeulenaere

Ralph Waldo Emerson was a radical thinker for his time. His ideas were in a large part the basis of the Transcendental movement. He wrote essays and gave lectures exhorting men to think for themselves. In the essay "Self Reliance," written in 1841, Emerson gives his reasons for men to forge their own way in life. In other words, men should be true to their convictions. Many of his ideas are applicable to modern society and can be used in daily living.

Emerson said one should believe in one's own thoughts. He felt the best minds in history spoke their own thoughts and broke with tradition. He also said people only half express themselves. If a man could only trust himself and recapture his youthful innocence, he would realize the value of his own opinions. Even if others say a man's impulses are evil, they are his own, and he should live by them. One must concern oneself with one's own life, not with what other people think.

Emerson said that most great men are misunderstood in their own time and that it is not a bad thing to be misunderstood. He also said that each genuine action compounds itself and brings force to one's character. Conformity and consistency weaken one's integrity. Man must live in the present, not the dead past or the unforeseeable future.

Emerson stated that self-existence and self-sufficiency are essentials of Nature. A man should reject his family and friends if they criticize him for living truly, "If we live truly, we shall see truly" (443).

Emerson listed four ideas by which he felt people should live. First he wrote, "...prayer as a means to a private end is meanness and theft" (445). Using prayer to contemplate the goodness of God's works is proper, while regrets are false prayer. Second, he wrote, "Travelling is a fool's paradise" (446). He felt a man should know himself at home and that travel doesn't change a man's inner self. Third, Emerson stated, "Insist on yourself; never imitate" (446). A man can never adopt another man's talents. One can only use the gifts with which one is born. Lastly, Emerson stated, "Society never advances" (447). He wrote that we are no better off than aborigines. What man has gained through technology has caused him to lose many of his primitive natural strengths and instincts. Emerson finished by saying that a man must stand alone and rely on his own convictions. "Nothing can bring you peace but yourself" (448).

I have found that when I follow my own beliefs and instincts, I make better decisions for my own way of living. Emerson said, "The voyage of a ship is a zigzag line of a hundred tacks. See that line from a sufficient distance, and it straightens itself to the average tendency. Your genuine action will explain itself" (441). I returned to college at age thirty-three because I wasn't happy with

my job. I already had an associate degree in laboratory technology, and my family and friends thought it would be more productive to pursue that career. I felt I wanted a career where I had closer relationships with my patients. I quit working, entered the nursing program, and earned my associate degree as a registered nurse last May. I am currently working toward my bachelor's degree in nursing. Many of my nursing colleagues are asking why I'm continuing in school while working and raising a family for what could ultimately be a minimal raise in pay. All I can tell them is that "...what I must do is all that concerns me, not what people think" (440). One's salary is not the true measure of one's career satisfaction.

I have not yet decided what I wish to accomplish with my nursing degree. "That which each can do best, none but his Maker can teach him" (446). As I work and gain more experience and knowledge, opportunities will come that I am presently unable to see. This has happened for me before; when one avenue I was following closed, another opened. My job in the laboratory was not filling my needs, so I discovered another route to take, although it meant years of study and sacrifice. Emerson stated, "...with the exercise of self-trust, new powers shall appear" (445). I am confident this is the path I must take.

When I reflect on my life, I can see the zigs and zags I have taken. I have lived in five houses, have had several different jobs, and have been involved in various community projects. Every new experience has added to the person I have become. I married at a young age and now have two wonderful children and a supportive family. My father-in-law is the exception. He feels I should stay home and take care of my husband, children, and house. Emerson said, "It is the harder because you will always find those who think they know your duty better than you know it" (440). I believe that a woman should be able to support herself while enjoying a rewarding career; this is the best example for her children of a rich and full life. Emerson wrote, "Nature suffers nothing to remain in her kingdoms which cannot help itself" (444). Living the life other think proper would not be right for me. I am following the course of my own choosing. "I must be myself" (444).



## Dad and I

by Sarah K. Ropposch

The hardest thing I ever had to learn to do in the forty years that I have lived was letting my Dad go. One can never fully realize just how close his mortality is until he watches a parent die. It's an event that you know sooner or later will happen; but somehow it is an event for which you are never fully prepared until the time actually comes, and you suddenly feel so completely lost, and all these questions crowd your mind. At this moment, reality forces you to look at your life; in my case I actually found some comforting thoughts.

My father's deterioration began after his seventieth birthday. I remember that day with sad clarity. My mother was out in the kitchen bustling around as usual, trying to make sure everything was in order for Dad's birthday dinner, and I had just entered the living room where my father was watching television in his recliner. "Happy Birthday, Dad!" I'd said, overly cheerful as I gave him a little pat on the shoulder.

He searched around for his remote and, after studying the buttons for a moment switched off the t.v.

"Take a seat, Paul."

"So, how's everything been, Dad?"

"Oh, pretty good, pretty good. Saw Burt Jonston at church last Sunday....Been a long time...."

And so the conversation went as Dad talked about old cohorts who had recently passed away and which baseball team was ahead of which, and what had happened the previous Sunday at church. As I patiently listened to my father's ramblings, smiling at all the old stories I'd heard a million and one times before, I realized that somewhere along the line, my father had gotten old, and I suddenly felt a lingering sadness. This man sitting in the chair across from me wasn't the tall, strong man of my memory who could split a log with one swift swing of his ax: He had shortened, and paled, and withered.

In all the mental slides of my memory, I recalled thinking my mother was the frail one; but through time that all had changed somehow, and now she was the vital one, doing all the cooking and cleaning, and still managing to take care of Dad who had had a stroke the year before. "What happened?" I suddenly asked myself. "What happened to those broad shoulders and the bulging arms?" It was almost as if that man had disintegrated and this frail human being had taken his place. It was the last thought that bowled me over, though: "My father is slowly dying right before my eyes."

From that day on, it seemed that my father's condition just became slowly, increasingly worse. He took on a stoop-shouldered posture, and a shuffling gait, and he had to depend more and more on my mother to help him get to and from the car, the bathroom and their bedroom. I tried to help as much as I

could, but there were times when I had just plain run out of sick days and vacation time at work. I felt bad, but as bad, and as helpless as I felt, I simply couldn't be there all the time.

It wasn't until three years later that I received the phone call at work that I had dreaded all along: My father had fallen down the porch stairs and, incredibly enough, survived, but just barely. Mom told me over the phone, in a trembling voice that Dad was in the hospital and that things didn't look very good.

I arrived at the hospital to visit Dad, and I found my poor mother in the waiting room wringing her hands. It was finally revealed that this hadn't been the first time my father had fallen; the first few times he had only been bruised and he had made my mother swear that she wouldn't tell me what had happened. I silently cursed my father's stubborn pride. Even as frail as he was, he didn't want to worry me. I hugged my mother and I held her close for a long time, whispering words of false hope.

When we were finally allowed in Dad's room I was horrified by the pasty semblance of the man I had once known. He was stuck full of wires and tubes and his eyelids fluttered as he slept. The soft flesh of his face seemed to have sunk into his cheeks, and I watched his shallow breathing, expecting it to stop any moment. How can I begin to describe the despair I felt as I stood holding my mother while she cried softly into the flannel of my shirt? As a father, myself, I realized with shock that it would someday be my kids looking down at me. I wanted to cry, too, but somehow the tears just weren't there.

I was at the hospital the next night when my father passed away. I was there to hold his hand. I was there to say my last goodbye. Just before he died, he had a moment of clarity where he spoke about his long deceased brother and the pranks they used to pull on the old woman who lived next door to my grandparents. Then, just as suddenly as he'd started on the subject of his brother, he switched his story about the time he and I went fishing when I was seven, and how I delighted at the big fish he'd helped me catch. As he finished his story his eyes closed, and the eyelids wavered for moment, and before I knew it, he was gone, his grip loosened in my hand. I gently laid his light, freckled hand down on the bedclothes, but I didn't call the nurse right away; this was my time with Dad. It was then that I shed my first tears.

At my father's wake I stood in my black suit, with my mother, my wife, and my family near me. At first I just noticed the things around me in the funeral parlor: the wallpaper, my father's casket, how oddly pretty Mom looked in her good black dress, and what a great job they had done on Dad; I had to admit, he looked good.

Then I allowed my mind to drift away from my present surroundings back through the years. Of all the memories I have of my father, my mind alighted on one in particular: It was mid-summer and I had stepped out from the cool

shade of the house to stand next to my father on the scuffed floorboards of the old front porch. I must have been eight or nine at the time, and my Dad meant everything to me. In fact, I thought he was the greatest man in the world.

I took a moment to steal a sidelong glance at his profile as he leaned against the rough wood of the railing, watching my mother weed her garden. He had the stubby end of a cigarette clenched between his first two fingers and every once and a while he took a long, thoughtful drag. He didn't smoke often, but when he did, it meant he had something on his mind.

After a considerable silence, he'd broken into speech as if he'd been talking to me for hours.

"Why, I still think your mother's the prettiest woman I've ever seen... don't you think so son?"

I had followed my Dad's line of vision to where my mother kneeled in the small flower bed at the edge of our property. She was wearing the floppy-brimmed hat she always wore for this job and her cheeks were rosy from working in the heat. To me she'd looked like a woman in a picture book.

"Yes sir...Mama's just about the prettiest woman on Earth!"

My father had chuckled.

"You sure do love your Mama, don't you?" He gave me a small pat on the back. "You're a good boy, Paul, you're a good boy."

Tears slid down my cheeks in open grief as this vision faded back into my memory. No one, at that time, would have guessed what a genuinely good and gentle man my father had been just by looking at his exterior: His hands were lined with scars and veins, his body was tan and muscular, his face was broad and handsome and his voice was deep and stern-sounding, but when he'd smiled, he'd lit up a room, and his laughter had been like wonderful, rumbling thunder. Those muscles had never been used for anything other than hard work, and those rough-hewn hands had never been used for anything other than tenderness.

Later, after the funeral, when I found time by myself to think, I wondered why my psyche had chosen that particular memory to linger on at that particular moment, and the answer came very easily: It had been that day that I had completely come to understand just how good my father was. It had been my father who had taught me to be a good man in all aspects of my life: as husband, father, lover, friend, neighbor. From my father I had gained so much. I learned to love God, to respect my wife, and to be kind to children and strangers. They were gifts beyond value -- gifts that would last me the rest of my life. I knew the healing process would be long, but I felt more at peace.

"Goodbye, Dad, and for all the times I never said it -- thank you," I whispered. "Maybe you can hear me, maybe you can't, but I love you. I always will."



ONE ON ONE  
Jimmie W. Hanes III



## There's No Place Like Home (Choice and Consequence)

by Sherry Jones

I've had a recurring dream about my "house." Although unfamiliar to me, I knew, in the dream, that the house was mine. Noting a sense of history, hope, and happiness within its walls, I remember walking from room to room, enjoying the atmosphere and making mental notes of what I would like to discard. Finding some secret rooms in the house, I marveled at the size and character of them, since their existence was not apparent by examining the exterior. Eventually, I realized the meaning of the dream; the house was me; the secret rooms were my hidden, internal belief systems, and the debris represented the poor choices I had failed to acknowledge in my lifetime. Morrow said, "What lies behind us and what lies before us are tiny matters compared to what lies within us." Whether or not we are participating in an archaeological self-dig, we are all involved in the process of making choices every day of our lives, and we bear the consequences of those choices.

As children, we are guided by the teachings and decisions of our parents and guardians, usually imitating their examples, adopting their beliefs and following their rules. Existing under the shelter of those rules provides a source of comfort and guidance for us youngsters, but as we mature, "musts" require re-evaluation to assure the formation of our own values and beliefs. Failure to question issues about which an individual has conflicting beliefs may keep him safe from internal confrontation, but it only succeeds in binding him further to a walled prison of previously programmed choices. Perhaps it would be better for him to make a wrong decision, learn from his mistake, alter his pattern of behavior, and proceed to apply the experience and information to the next situation. Of course, one should not get into a car and drive while intoxicated, or jump in front of a speeding train to test evolving values and judgements, but most life choices don't result in fatalities; they work to build character and individuality. Successful choices are steps leading toward the realization that the prerogative exists to discard illogical, inherited ideologies -- those dinosaurs formed out of habit, and usually justified by the maxim, "That's the way we've always done it."

When I was seventeen, I decided that I wanted to emulate my mom, and become the "perfect mother." Abandoning thoughts of college, I succeeded rather quickly at becoming pregnant. The consequences of that action were swift and severe; high school college prep classes were dropped in response to my ballooning and nauseated body, the baby's father chose GMI (General Motors Institute) over playing house, I married an abuser "to give the child a name,"

and all the forces of the adult world came crashing over my idealistic head. The effects of that one decision continue to snowball, affecting scores of people in countless ways even today, twenty years later.

Constant examination of my own truths finds them in a continuing state of metamorphosis; necrotic convictions are being replaced with the perceptions of a more mature and enlightened self. My foundation isn't crumbling beneath me, as those who refuse to examine their own belief systems may fear; instead of weakening, I'm finding new strength. Rigorously challenging old social mores and inherited axioms, desiring growth and truth, I'm renewed with greater clarity of mind and heart. The execution of modified persuasions reflect this new found liberty; the questioning sentence, "I will be happy when ..." is answered, "I am happy now."

One of the old tenets dictated that happiness was to be found in a lifelong marriage partner. For some this may be true, but too many people accept this idea as the single solution to their quest for happiness. Rose colored glasses firmly in place, some of the more unfortunate souls may spend their lives in abusive situations, denying hope, fearing no available alternative. Staying in a toxic relationship is a choice in itself; by doing nothing, they select to remain and accept the abuse. The fear may be that leaving the situation will be more painful than remaining, and the learned helplessness of the individual may distort their conception of reality. The lifestyle of Little Susie Homemaker could certainly change if she altered her marital circumstance, but that is her choice; such changes as income and social status represent the consequences of her decision. The future can be as bright and promising as she chooses to make it, filled with as many successes as she would care to pursue. Something as simple as a sunset could be a source of great personal pleasure and serene satisfaction.

Most of the decisions made in the first thirty years of my life were based on the needs and standards of other people, especially regarding relationships. Becoming the "property" of a selfish, controlling human being left me emotionally drained and physically exhausted. As the last shreds of hope for the marriage's continuation flickered away in dying embers, a dear friend grabbed me by the hair, kicking and screaming, and challenged me to take a long, hard look at myself. Making the choice to leave that disastrous and destructive relationship, I gratefully acknowledge and accept the consequences of searching for an adequate job and looking for a new home. Maybe I, too, am not one of those who will spend my later years holding the hand of some significant other, contentedly sharing each sunset; those sunsets won't be any less spectacular if I view them alone. No choices are guaranteed to be entirely successful all of the time, but those who wait for opportunities to rescue them in a convenient time, and in a favorable circumstance, will have missed the moment. I fully intend to spend the next few years kicking the hell out of the cobwebs in my "house," redecorating the secret rooms, and reclaiming unrestrained autonomy. The decision is mine, and for me, there's no place like home.



ROOSTER  
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